

Crown Prince renews call for zakat fund

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday renewed a call for the establishment of an international zakat fund to improve the lives of Muslim peoples. The Crown Prince was speaking at a meeting in his office with visiting Chairman of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Ahmad Mohammad Ali. The Prince said that efforts should be made to help the poor and especially refugees in areas lacking non-governmental organisations. Dr. Ali pledged commitment to the development of Islamic countries and readiness for backing Jordanian development programmes. Dr. Ali on Monday signed five agreements providing Jordan with a total of \$44 million in loans and grants to help the Kingdom carry out development projects including improving the infrastructure of the Kingdom's poor regions.

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King wishes Saudi monarch speedy recovery

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday called Saudi Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, to inquire after the health of King Fahd who was admitted on Monday to King Faisal Speciality Hospital in Riyadh for treatment for an inflammation of the gall bladder. King Hussein wished the Saudi monarch speedy recovery and continued good health. King Hussein and Prince Abdullah discussed issues of common concern, including the stalled Middle East peace process and means of overcoming the obstacles impeding its resumption, particularly on the Palestinian-Israeli track. King Hussein and Prince Abdullah stressed the need for the two sides to comply with the agreements reached in preparation for engaging in final stage negotiations. They also called for reviving the peace process on the other tracks to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

Crown Prince, Netanyahu issue joint statement aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation

By Alia A. Thukan
In Tel Aviv
and agency dispatches

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan called for a reinvigoration of the stalled Middle East peace process, and the implementation of signed agreements in Tel Aviv yesterday, after talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Defence Yitzhak Mordechai. The two leaders produced a joint statement of over 10 points aimed at bolstering bilateral ties in the fields of water and infrastructure, economic and trade relations and transportation. (See full text of statement and Prince Hassan's speech at dinner banquet on page 7).

"The idea of peace must be translated into concrete terms. When peace is tangible it becomes both real and permanent. To be so, it must be appreciated. It would not be appreciated unless it touches the life of our people. Our commitment is to this kind of peace. A peace in which people believe," the Crown Prince told journalists in a press conference after the talks.

Jordanian officials had said that a string of bilateral talks held this week would have to produce tangible results for the resumption of "normal" relations after the Mossad's assassination attempt on

Hamas leader Khalid Misha'al in Amman last September.

Signalling an improvement of political ties between the two countries following a five-month chill, the Crown Prince was accompanied by a high-level delegation of more than 35 people, including Foreign Minister Jawad Anani, Minister of Water and Irrigation Munther Haddadin, and Minister of Information Abdullah Ensour, Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Sa'd Hayel Srou, and seven members of Parliament, and a number of businesspersons and academics.

The diversity of the delegations is meant to reflect that there are people in Jordan who seek peace with the Jewish state on all levels, said a Jordanian official, requesting anonymity.

Mr. Netanyahu hailed "the new beginning" with Jordan, while Crown Prince Hassan called for people to also look at the positive achievements of the peace process: "The ice did thaw between Arabs and Israelis; we did begin the long process of getting to know one another. Jordan has been cooperating with Israel on vital projects. The functional approach has been utilised to build bridges and create confidence building measures."

In a speech at a dinner banquet that Mr. Netanyahu hosted in honour of the



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan gestures as he answers to a question during a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Tel Aviv yesterday (AFP photo)

Crown Prince and the Jordanian delegation, Prince Hassan said that Jordan's "historical legacy and geographical proximity dictate on Jordan a moral responsibility towards the Palestinian people."

"Jordan will continue to shoulder that responsibility until a just and comprehensive peace is achieved," he said.

In the joint statement

after yesterday's talks, the two sides said "they underlined the need to achieve tangible progress by implementing agreements reached between Israel and the Palestinians."

Asked in the joint press conference with Mr. Netanyahu if his talks put an end to differences between the two countries following the Misha'al affair the Crown Prince

said:

"I have had my differences with Mr. Netanyahu and my country has had its differences with Israel, but it is time not to look at today or yesterday but towards the future."

"It's better to light a candle than curse the darkness," he added.

Prince Hassan said Jordan was ready "to continue our cooperation with Israel in a spirit of mutual respect."

"Today marks a new beginning," he said, but he quickly added that "the peace process with the Palestinians must also be relaunched."

Mr. Netanyahu for his part reiterated a call for Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to meet directly with him to discuss ways to revive peace negotiations deadlocked for more than a year.

Following are major excerpts from the press conference that the Crown Prince and the prime minister held in Tel Aviv yesterday:

I would like to say that it is certain that we are all concerned to have the peace process capture the momentum and the vigour that we would like to see in honouring that human face of peace. I came from Ramallah yesterday where I met with the Palestinian leadership at their request and I would like to emphasize that we have all ample

time to assess future advantages of peace and not only to measure the complexities and challenges of making peace in the region that has fraught with war for so long. The treaties, agreements and accords already signed reflect the courage and the vision of Jordanians, Palestinians and the Israelis alike. But I would like to ask you ladies and gentlemen what remains of the hope, the promise and reassurance of regional regeneration that used to underline all our statements about a shared future? Most of all what's happened to the solemn pledges that we have agreed to honour in Oslo, Wadi Araba and Washington, to this question I would like to say to the prime minister that you and I and the members of our cabinets are in agreement and I say it in the presence of members of the Jordanian cabinet and Jordanian parliament, that we are committed to rejuvenate the peace process. I would like to say that we are committed to a renewed political will and to uphold the pledges signed by all parties to peace. Palestinians, Jordanians and Israelis. And you are committed to finding that energy to focus and pick up where we have left from. I would like to remind you ladies and gentlemen that we cannot live a state of permanent crisis in

(Continued on page 7)

29 detainees in Ma'an disturbances released

AMMAN (J.T.) — A group of 29 persons detained and interrogated for suspected involvement in the disturbances in the southern town of Ma'an last month have been released after His Majesty King Hussein directed to the government Monday to speed up the process of investigation.

Jordan Television said that "in response to the King's instructions to the government to speed up investigation procedures with regard to detainees suspected of taking part in the Ma'an disturbances and to release those among them who were not found to have been implicated in those incidents, the military judge at the State Security Court, Brigadier Mamoun Khasawneh, has instructed the court's prosecutor, Lieutenant Colonel Mahmoud Obeidar, to execute the King's directives."

It said that as a result 29 detainees were released

Tuesday from detention on bail.

One man was killed and over 20 injured in the clashes between demonstrators and police on Feb. 20 and 21 following pro-Iraq rallies.

At least 44 people were interrogated for their alleged involvement in the demonstrations and clashes with the police. Following the disturbances a one-week curfew was clamped on Ma'an and the police carried out house-to-house searches during which they reportedly confiscated 500 illegal weapons and unspecified quantities of explosives.

Lower House deputies and political parties have repeatedly demanded the immediate release of the detainees.

The directives from the King to the prime minister on Monday said that detainees who committed minor offences are to be released and the others to be referred to court for trial.

Egyptian cargo plane crashes in Mombasa

MOMBASA (AFP) — An Egyptian Boeing 707 cargo plane crashed and burst into flames at Mombasa's Moi International Airport on the Kenyan coast on take-off Tuesday, killing all six crew members, witnesses said.

The Air Memphis plane was flying from the northern Tanzanian Lake Victoria town of Mwanza with a cargo of fish fillets, and was taking off after making a refuelling stop at the airport.

As the aircraft ascended, one of its wheels hit the perimeter fence, sending the plane plunging into a valley 500 metres away where it burst into flames.

Two people on the ground were slightly injured by debris, which scattered over a wide area around the crash site.

Israeli troops kill 3 Palestinians, wound 9 at W. Bank checkpoint

TARQUMIA (AFP) — Israeli troops at a West Bank checkpoint opened fire Tuesday on a van packed with Palestinian labourers, killing three and wounding at least three others, Israeli officials said.

One of the wounded was in critical condition, military sources said, and Palestinian sources said as many as nine people may have been injured.

The border guards opened fire on the Ford Transit van after the vehicle slightly injured a soldier as it drove

through the checkpoint near the border with Israel, the officials said.

The guards said they believed the van had tried to run them down, but other witnesses cited on Israel Radio said the vehicle apparently swerved out of control due to a mechanical problem.

The van was carrying Palestinian workers back to their West Bank homes from jobs in Israel when it passed through the checkpoint near this village outside the major West Bank city of Hebron.

The incident occurred in the early evening, when many Palestinian labourers return home from Israel each day.

Palestinians who witnessed the shooting attacked the Israeli forces with stones and bottles. Troops retaliated with rubber-coated bullets and tear gas but no further injuries were reported, according to witnesses.

A spokesman for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat held the Israeli government responsible for the deadly incident.

"We condemn this army firing on civilians and we hold the Israeli authorities responsible," said Nabil Abu Rudeina.

"The Israelis opened fire for no reason," he told AFP.

The killings were expected to worsen tensions at a time of high Palestinian frustration with the year-long deadlock in peace negotiations with Israel's right-wing government.

There was no immediate response to the shooting by the Israeli government.

U.S. refuses to help Israeli commercial rocket project

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Washington has blocked a deal between U.S. and Israeli defence firms for joint launches of a commercial rocket on grounds the project could help Israel's nuclear weapons programme, the Haaretz newspaper reported Tuesday.

Acting on a recommendation from the State Department, the government refused to approve an agreement between a U.S. firm and Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) which would have permitted test launches from U.S. soil of the commercial Israeli rocket Shavit, the newspaper reported.

The contract would have allowed IAI to enter the lucrative market for launching meteorological and civilian observation satellites into orbit.

Currently the market is closed to Israel because it cannot launch its Shavit rocket eastward over Arab airspace and launching satellites westward against the earth's orbit

is much costlier.

According to the Haaretz report, Washington opposes any U.S. involvement with the Shavit because Israel is not a signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Media reports say Washington fears Israel could use test launches of the Shavit to improve the performance of its similar Jericho missile, on which Israel has reportedly mounted nuclear warheads.

An official at IAI said he was unaware of any U.S. government attempt to block the deal which he said involved the U.S. firm Colman Research Company (CRC).

"The negotiations are ongoing on this contract and we are not aware of any such opposition" from the U.S. government, said the official on grounds he not be identified.

He said a memorandum of understanding had already been signed with the U.S. company involving the joint production of a launcher based on the Shavit capable of

putting "lightweight satellites" into orbit.

Under U.S. law, in order for a rocket to be fired from U.S. soil, 51 per cent of its components must be manufactured in the United States, he said.

Israel joined the small group of space powers on April 5, 1995 by placing an Ofek-3 (Horizon-3) spy satellite into orbit aboard a Shavit rocket launched from Israeli territory.

An attempt in January to put a replacement spy satellite, Ofek-4, into orbit failed.

According to the press, the Shavit is a civilian version of the Jericho, a missile with a range of 4,500 kilometres.

The Arab League announced on Monday that a meeting of league foreign ministers in Cairo later this month would discuss "security dangers" posed by Israeli satellites.

The issue was placed on the agenda of the March 24-25 meeting at the request of Iraq.

Lebanon calls Israel holding prisoners as bargaining chips 'scandalous'

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Justice Minister Bahige Tabbara on Tuesday called the Israeli supreme court's decision to hold 10 Lebanese as bargaining chips against Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon "scandalous."

Lebanon "demands the freeing of 150 Lebanese which Israel is holding without reason and without trial," he told reporters.

The Israeli supreme court last week threw out a request to release 10 Lebanese prisoners held in administrative detention for more than four years. The court ruled the prisoners can be used to gain the return of four Israeli soldiers missing since Israel's war in Lebanon from 1982 to 1985.

The Israeli court also said that in "such situations a violation of human rights is inevitable." Amnesty International has called the Israeli decision "intolerable."

Ritter winds up trouble-free mission

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. arms inspector Scott Ritter, a former U.S. Marine dubbed a spy in Baghdad, left Tuesday after a trouble-free mission which was seen as a test of Iraq's pledge of cooperation.

The U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) for Iraq's disarmament said Mr. Ritter's team of arms experts inspected a total of eight "sensitive" sites, such as military or intelligence facilities, "all of them to the full satisfaction of the team."

"Ritter and the majority of his team left this morning and are back in Bahrain," where UNSCOM has a support base, spokeswoman Janet Sullivan told AFP.

The official news agency INA said the former Marine "informed the Iraqi side that he has completed his mission without any obstruction and thanked Iraq for its full cooperation."

Mr. Ritter arrived Thursday at the head of a 50-member team — made up of 11 nationalities, including 12 Americans, 10 Australians, nine Poles, eight Argentines and five Britons — and started work the next day.

The mission was seen as a test of Iraq's pledge to cooperate fully with UNSCOM under a Feb. 23 accord with U.N. chief Kofi Annan. It was to last three more days but Mr. Ritter finished his work quicker than scheduled, INA said.

Mr. Ritter's work was intensive. On Sunday-Monday, his team carried out a marathon 20-hour inspection covering

two sites.

A senior U.N. official in New York, requesting anonymity, said Monday the Iraqi government has informally been told that a "special group" set up to carry out the inspections, would start work "two weeks from now."

Mr. Annan has released details of new guidelines for inspections of the presidential sites. The procedures were sent to the U.N. Security Council after the secretary general met Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf in New York.

Under last month's accord, Iraq averted U.S. military strikes by agreeing to unfettered access for the arms inspectors searching for Iraqi weapons secrets.

The head of the special group for presidential sites, Sri Lankan diplomat Jayantha Dhanapala, is due in Baghdad on Wednesday.

Mr. Dhanapala wrote last Friday to countries with diplomatic representation in Baghdad and in the region, including Britain and the United States, asking for their participation in the presidential site inspections.

The diplomats who are to accompany the UNSCOM inspectors are to be taken from a pool of almost 100.

In what was seen as a softening of the U.S. stand, the White House said Monday it would check with other Security Council members before attacking Iraq if Baghdad breaks the Feb. 23 accord.

Marine Corps Major Mary Baldwin, a spokeswoman for the U.S. central command

U.N., Iraqi teams resume negotiations

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. and Iraqi delegations on Tuesday resumed negotiations aimed at overcoming obstacles holding up implementation of an enhanced oil-for-food deal.

The head of the Iraqi technical team, health ministry undersecretary Shawqi Murqus, told AFP: "We are exchanging views," but declined to give further details.

U.N. officials said the teams hoped to wrap up their talks Wednesday before the full delegation meets again on Thursday at a session led by Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf and U.N. Deputy Secretary General Louise Frechette.

Mr. Sahhaf, who arrived in New York Sunday, met Tuesday with non-permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and said afterwards he had sought their support for "the joint work of Iraq and the U.N. secretariat."

He reaffirmed that Iraq did not have the technical capacity to pump more than \$4 billion worth of oil over six months, despite a U.N. Security Council resolution authorising the sale of up to \$5.2 billion for strictly humanitarian purposes.

"This is a fact. This is a reality, because we need maintenance and spare parts for the oil installations in Iraq," said the minister.

He also reaffirmed Iraq's opposition to paying out extra funds to compensate for the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Under the oil-for-food agreement in force since December 1996, two-thirds of the oil profits are set aside for badly-needed food and medicine, while 30 per cent covers compensation for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The rest defrays the cost of U.N. weapons inspectors. But in a potential deal breaker, Iraq has objected to the sharp rise in compensation which would be automatic under the enhanced arrangement, which will come into force once a new distribution plan has been approved.

Mr. Sahhaf said that "if it is a humanitarian and emergency programme, it is logical not to impose a deduction on that already limited money."

Any change in the percentage set aside for compensation would have to be decided by the U.N. Security Council, he noted.

U.S. to send naval surveillance planes to Qatar

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States will temporarily deploy P-3C "Orion" naval surveillance planes to the Gulf emirate of Qatar later this year, a U.S. military official said on Monday.

Marine Corps Major Mary Baldwin, a spokeswoman for the U.S. central command

based in Tampa, Florida, told Reuters that the big planes, designed to detect and track submarines, would be temporarily deployed to Qatar for operations in the region.

A Qatari government spokesman said in the capital of Doha earlier in the day that the P-3C basing would be

allowed. Maj. Baldwin would not say how many of the four-engine, turbo-prop aircraft would be sent to Qatar or when the deployment would begin.

It will be another in a series of temporary deployments of U.S. military planes to Qatar

and other moderate Gulf states to emphasise Washington's support against what it sees as potential threats from Iraq and Iran.

The Orion can circle large areas of ocean for long periods and is chiefly designed for submarine detection.

Israeli police make notes on the front of a suspected stolen car Tuesday as more than 1,000 Israeli troops carried out a huge sweep against suspected car thieves in the West Bank village of Shuweika (Reuters photo)

day in a major raid on suspected car theft rings, police said.

Police officers backed up by troops and undercover operatives sealed off Shuweiika around dawn and carried out searches of homes and workshops where they say cars stolen in Israel were dismantled for resale as spare parts, a police spokesman said.

It was the biggest in a series of recent raids by Israeli security forces on West Bank villages serving as "chop shops" for the dismantling of Israeli cars stolen by joint Israeli-Palestinian criminal gangs.

Shuweiika is located along the "green line" separating the West Bank from Israel near

Israeli officials said Palestinian police were informed of the operation shortly before it was launched.

More than 40,000 vehicles were stolen in Israel last year, a 30 per cent increase over 1996, and Israeli police say that most of them end up in the West Bank where they are dismantled and sold as spare parts.

Hizbollah leads new war against Israel

BEIRUT (DPA) — Hizbollah movement is currently enhancing what it termed "a psychological war" against Israel, first by calling for the establishment of a Hebrew enemy resorts to censoring the casualties or denying that a certain attack has taken place to improve their image in front of their public and their leaders."

Hizballah on the second day broadcast actual pictures of the attack that took place Feb. 28 showing Israeli and SLA movement near the post shortly before the attack and then guerrillas attacking the post and erecting the Hizballah flag on the post.

The aim of setting up a satellite Hebrew station which will broadcast among other things our actual live filming of the attacks that sometimes show enemy soldiers getting killed will be a new weapon

Hizbollah's private television station "Al Manaar," which is usually monitored by most foreign and local journalists in Beirut, is the one to broadcast such pictures after they have been filmed.

The Hizbullah official said finding the operators "is not an easy task for guerrillas," they film to give further proof that the actual attack took place and inflicted casualties because, sometimes, the

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Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44

09:30Cairo (MS)
10:15	Doha, Al Hudaydah (TY)
10:30	.....Jeddah (SV)
10:50	.....Kuwait (KU)
13:10	.....Tunis (TU)
13:25	Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF)
13:45	.....Khartoum (add) (RJ)
13:50	.....Tel Aviv (LY)
15:05	.....Vienna (OS)
15:30	.....Algiers (AR)
16:05	Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
20:10	.....Beirut (ME)
21:10	.....Paris, Damascus (AF)
23:30	.....Athens (BA)
23:15	.....London (BO)

1527/001 or 44053280).	23:30 .....London, Beirut (BA)
	23:35 .....Amsterdam (KL)
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ)	Royal Wings (RW)
Flights	07:45 .....Agaba (RW)
07:25 .....Damascus (RJ)	09:05 .....Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:05 .....Larnaca (RJ)	09:50 .....Amman (Marka Air
08:35 .....Lodich (RJ)	port) (RW)
	17:20 .....Tel Aviv (RW)

08:50	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)	18:50	Amman (QAIA) (RW)
15:00	New York, Amsterdam (RJ)	21:20	Aqaba (RW)
17:05	Paris (RJ)	22:50	Amman (Marka Air port) (RW)
17:45	Madrid, Geneva (RJ)		
17:50	Brussels, Vienna (RJ)		
18:10	London, Berlin (RJ)		
18:20	Frankfurt, Istanbul (RJ)		
18:40	Rome (RJ)		
23:10	Beirut (RJ)		
00:05	Cairo (RJ)		
01:00	Jeddah (add) (RJ)		

DEPARTURES

10:40	Berlin, London (RJ)
11:00	Istanbul, Rome (RJ)
19:30	Colombo (RJ)
19:35	Beirut (RJ)
20:00	Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:05	Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)

Other Flights

**Turkey says 32 Km
killed in latest clash**

DIYARBAKIR (R) Turkish security forces killed 32 Kurdish separatist rebels in the clashes in southern Turkey, military officials said on Tuesday. No military casualties were reported.

Zeroual arrives in Geneva for medical test

GENEVA (AFP)—Algerian President Liamine Zouari arrived in Geneva Tuesday to undergo medical tests, Algerian officials said. The Algerian minister to the United Nations refused to provide details of the tests or say how long the president would remain in Switzerland. Reports only confirm a statement by Algerians by the Associated Press news agency that Zouari said Mr. Zouari would undergo a "circulatory" examination.

Iranian sentenced to death for drugs

DUBAI (AFP) — A court in the southern Gulf emirate of Dubai has sentenced a young Iranian man to death for trafficking in hashish, newspapers reported Tuesday. The Gulf News said Mousa Dad Karim, 21, was found guilty of possession of more than five kilograms of hashish for trading. An Iranian defendant was jailed for years, to be followed by deportation, for "unintentionally" possessing drugs, the paper said.

Iraq, Kuwait to meet on missing

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq and Kuwait are to meet on March 18 to discuss the issue of some 100 Kuwaitis and other nationals who went missing during the Iraqi occupation of the emirate, a Red Cross official here said Tuesday.

The official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is asking not to be named said a committee on missing and prisoners of war would meet in the border town of Umm Q.

Apart from representatives of Iraq and Kuwait, a technical committee also comprises the Saudi Arabia, Britain, France, Sudan, Libya and the United States.

It has already met several times under the auspices of the ICRC. Kuwait asked Iraq of holding 600 prisoners seized during August 1990-1991 occupation, when Baghdad detainees held by them in its prisons or held by them any information on their fate.

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NEWS IN

What's going on

Crown Prince, Princess Sarvath meet with Red Cross official

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath Tuesday hosted a lunch in honour of Astrid Heiberg, who was recently elected president of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Their discussion revolved around cooperation between the international federation and the Jordan National Red Crescent Society.

Dr. Heiberg expressed appreciation of the activities of the Prince and Princess in support of the federation's missions and their contributions to humanitarian causes.

Also present at the meeting were HRH Princess Basma, Minister of Health and Medical Care Ashraf Kurdi, the Swedish ambassador, and Mohammad Hadid, president of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society.

Dr. Heiberg, the first woman to serve as president of the international federation, is currently on a five-day tour to Lebanon and Syria, in addition to Jordan.



PRINCESS OPENS SYMPOSIUM: Princess Rania opens a one-day symposium Tuesday on the role of women in protecting the family from delinquency as part of the activities marking International Women's Day. The symposium, held at the Jordan University of Science and Technology, was organised by the Jordanian Society for the Welfare of Delinquents in cooperation with the Jordanian Women's Committee (Petra photo)

Arab-Israeli peace process, Iraq focus of meeting today

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Arab Peace and Solidarity Organisation will begin a meeting today to discuss the Arab-Israeli peace process, the situation in Iraq and other regional issues, an organiser said Tuesday.

Issa Mdanat, secretary general of Jordan's chapter of the organisation, said the two-day meeting will also discuss the possibility of holding a conference of Arab non-governmental organisations later this year.

He told the Jordan Times that delegates from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Iraq and Libya will attend the meeting, which is being held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

"The conference will discuss the threats maintained by the United States against Iraq following Baghdad's agreement with the U.N.," Mr. Mdanat said, referring to the Feb. 26 agreement between Iraq and the U.N. granting arms inspection

unrestricted access to sites in Iraq.

The U.S. threatened that it would launch a military strike against Iraq if Baghdad 'blocked' inspections by the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) monitoring the elimination of Iraq's mass destruction weapons.

"The meeting is aimed at creating a unified popular and official Arab stand against these threats," Mr. Mdanat, a former member of the Jordan Communist Party, said.

Another issue to be discussed, he said, is "resurrecting the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbours."

"The most important element is Israel's compliance with U.N. resolutions, especially those concerning the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the occupied territories and the implementation of accords signed with the Palestinians," Mr. Mdanat added.

He added that the meeting, which will be attended by former Arab foreign ministers and ambassadors, will discuss

Turkey's proposed water projects on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, a move which Syria and Iraq maintain would reduce their share of water.

"Another topic on the meeting's agenda is means of combating terrorism in the Middle East, especially the massacres in Algeria and attacks against tourists in Egypt."

"But we believe that operations against Israel are a legitimate right which by no means can be described as terrorism," Mr. Mdanat added.

The Arab Peace and Solidarity Organisation is an offshoot of the Asia-Africa Peace and Solidarity Organisation, which was established in 1957 following the landmark conference of the Non-Alignment Movement in Indonesia.

The conference was attended by former Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, Indonesian President Abdurrahman Sukarno, Yugoslav President Josip Tito, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and other Third World leaders.

Prime minister briefs Council of Ministers on King's visits to UAE, Oman, Egypt

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Tuesday briefed the Council of Ministers on the outcome of His Majesty King Hussein's recent visits to the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Egypt and talks with their leaders.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Abdullah Ensour said the King's visits and the statements which followed them displayed complete identity of views between Jordan and the Palestinian and Iraqi problems.

During the King's visits, agreement was reached on facilitating the entry of Jordanians and Jordanian agricultural and industrial products to these Arab countries, according to Dr. Ensour.

Referring to the King's upcoming visit to the U.S., Dr. Ensour said: "It is one of the most important visits, since it follows the end of a period of tension that prevailed in the region over the Iraq issue, the return of life to the Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations and calls for reviving the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks."

He said King Hussein's visits and HRH Crown Prince Hassan's visit to Ramallah and Tel Aviv and visits by Iraqi, Turkish and Israeli officials to Jordan are part of the flurry of diplomatic activities which Jordan is spearheading towards reaching solutions for the Iraqi and Palestinian questions.

Dr. Ensour said Jordan is seeking to consolidate the U.N.-Iraqi agreement on arms inspection and improve the life of the Iraqi people, who can benefit from additional funds earned from selling \$5.2 billion worth of oil to buy food and medicine.

In his forthcoming visit to the U.S., King Hussein and President Bill Clinton and the Senate will discuss the American administration's allocation of \$225 million in annual aid to Jordan, of which \$150 million will come as direct aid and \$75 million in military aid, according to Dr. Ensour, who noted that Jordan will submit a request for more aid in the coming year.

He said Prince Hassan's visits to Ramallah and Tel

Aviv are designed to complete the round of contacts initiated by the King before making the trip to Washington on Thursday.

"Jordan does not mediate but it makes contacts, discusses, exerts pressure and conveys views in meetings so as to ensure that all parties honour their commitments," Dr. Ensour continued.

"It is known that Israel is not committing itself to implementing the second phase of the peace accords, but it is suggesting commencement of the third phase without execution of the second phase," he added.

Dr. Ensour said Prince Hassan's visit to Ramallah was to familiarise himself with the Palestinian leadership's views, which he said show that the Israelis are dealing in form rather than content and so no progress has been achieved so far.

According to Dr. Ensour, the Council of Ministers reviewed Jordanian diplomatic efforts over Kosovo and Jordan's stand, which opposes the uprooting of people from their homeland as a result of ethnic cleans-

ing. He said Foreign Minister Jawad Anani submitted a report to the Cabinet on his contacts with the diplomatic missions in Amman urging their countries to act towards preventing human tragedies.

The Council also heard reports about visits to Jordan by Israeli ministers Sharon and Sharansky and their discussions over water and the exchange of goods between Israel and Jordan.

According to Dr. Ensour, the Council of Ministers had a first reading of the new election draft law. He noted that the government will intensify its study of the various aspects of the draft law prior to presenting it to Parliament before the end of the current session.

Also at Tuesday's session, the Cabinet approved a \$15 million U.S. loan to finance wheat purchases, a JD27.8 million loan agreement with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development to finance the second stage of the construction of Al Mujib Dam in the southern Jordan Valley, and a \$5 million loan agreement with the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank

(IDB).

The Cabinet approved an exchange of memoranda between the Jordanian and Japanese governments stipulating that Japan will provide fire-fighting equipment and services worth \$15.5 million to the Civil Defence Department.

The Council of Ministers also approved an agreement between the government and the Water Authority of Jordan to finance the Irbid-Tabaqat Fahl water project, and a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment and the Tunisian Environment Ministry.

The Cabinet reviewed a memorandum prepared by Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf on a financial protocol between the Jordanian and French governments and decided to reallocate the amount of JD158.262 to the Irbid Water Project.

Four delegations were given permission to participate in various meetings, including the Arab League Council meeting, which will be held at the foreign ministers level in Cairo from March 25-31.

Majali meets with EU ambassadors in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali was the guest of honour at a lunch given by European Union (EU) ambassadors Tuesday, according to a press release from the EU office here.

Dr. Majali and the EU ambassadors took advantage of the occasion to discuss a wide range of issues of common concern. They discussed current efforts by both Jordan and the EU to advance the Middle East peace process. They also discussed the situation in Iraq following the passing of Security Council resolutions 1153 and 1154, and in particular ways of improving the humanitarian situation in Iraq, the statement continued.

They also discussed economic cooperation between the EU and Jordan and how this could best be utilised to assist the ongoing process of economic reform and help Jordan seize the opportunities offered by the EU-Jordan Association Agreement.

Total EU economic assistance to Jordan in 1997 amounted to \$370 million, the statement concluded.

Amman, Algiers become sister cities

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Algeria signed an agreement Tuesday to make the two countries' capitals, Amman and Algiers, sister cities in order to increase bilateral cooperation in city planning, municipal services and other relevant fields.

According to the agreement, which was signed by Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi and Algiers Governor Sharif Rahmani, the two sides will exchange expertise in city planning and management.

Officials from the two sides will exchange visits to look into further areas of cooperation, especially environmental protection, and will coordinate their efforts in providing services and training personnel, according to a statement following the signing ceremony.

The sister cities agreement also provides for encouraging joint investments and creating a committee to follow up and

coordinate the implementation of the agreement.

Addressing the ceremony, Dr. Abbadi described the agreement as the first step on the road of cooperation in various other fields.

The agreement is certain to bolster bilateral ties between the peoples of Jordan and Algeria, he added.

For his part, Mr. Rahmani underlined the importance of the agreement as an instrument

to further strengthen ties.

The signing ceremony marked the conclusion of a four-day visit by Mr. Rahmani and his accompanying delegation, during which they met with HRH Crown Prince Hassan and held talks with Dr. Abbadi.

The Algerian official was seen off at the airport by Dr. Abbadi and a number of officials representing the Amman Municipality.

RJ plan to fly Iraqi pilgrims to Saudi Arabia delayed despite U.N. approval

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite U.N. approval of a Jordanian request to fly Muslim pilgrims from Iraq to Saudi Arabia, a date has not yet been set to begin operating these flights, a senior Royal Jordanian (RJ) official said.

"Although that the hajj [pilgrim] season is very near, neither the beginning date nor the number of flights RJ is expected to operate has been decided," RJ President Nader Dahabi told the Jordan Times.

He declined to reveal the problems that have caused the delay but said RJ was ready to allocate one or two planes to transport Iraqi pilgrims from Baghdad to Saudi Arabia's western city of Jeddah.

The pilgrimage season is expected to start as early as April 1.

The number of Iraqi pilgrims RJ was expected to carry was also not known at present, Mr. Dahabi added.

Commercial flights to and from Baghdad have been banned as part of the seven-year-old U.N. sanctions on Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait.

Last month, the U.N. sanctions committee approved Jordan's request to operate commercial flights to carry the Iraqi pilgrims.

Last year, Iraq defied U.N. sanctions and launched a direct flight to Jeddah to transport more than a hundred Iraqi pilgrims to Mecca.

Meanwhile, the first group of Iranian tourists are expected to arrive here on March 15 in line with a recent tourism agreement signed between Jordan and Iran, according to Mohammad Imam, head of the Jordan Travel and Tourism Agents Association.

Mr. Imam told the Jordan Times that the agreement includes operating 20 "temporary flights" to bring Iranian tourists to Jordan to visit Shiite holy sites.

The deal was concluded last month between a team of Iranian tourism agents and Royal Jordanian.

He added that another group of Iranian tourists will arrive here on March 21, the same day as Iran's celebration of the Persian new year.

The two countries' flag carriers are expected to resume regular flights between Amman and Tehran by June 1.

"Our aim is to make Jordan a destination point for Iranian tourists and not simply a transit point on the way to Syria, Iraq and Egypt," Mr. Imam said.

"Figures showed that more than 300,000 Iranian tourists visited Syria last year. Our objective is to attract a similar number of tourists to the Kingdom this year," he added.

Mr. Imam said Minister of Interior Nader Dahabi gave instructions to the Jordanian ambassador in Tehran to facilitate visa issuance procedures to Iranian tourists

and businesspeople.

Iranian tourists focus on visiting religious sites like the tomb of Prophet Mohammad's companion Abdullah Bin Rowaha and that of Ja'afar Bin Abu Talib, a cousin of the Prophet, as well as other holy sites.

Mr. Imam said the rapprochement in relations between the two countries that followed the visit of HRH Crown Prince Hassan to Iran would help in bringing more Iranians to the Kingdom.

Jordan's relations with Tehran were severed in the early 1980s due to the Kingdom's perceived tilt towards Iraq during the 1980-88 Gulf war.

But full diplomatic ties were resumed in 1992 and relations improved following the Organisation of Islamic Conference in Tehran. Crown Prince Hassan, who attended the three-day summit, met with senior Iranian official during his stay.

Warmer weather expected today

AMMAN (Petra) — Meteorology Department sources Tuesday expected sunny and warm weather today and tomorrow with temperatures reaching 18 degrees Celsius. The sources predicted a gradual drop in temperatures Wednesday night and scattered showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom. On Thursday and Friday, temperatures will drop to a maximum of 14 and 15 degrees, the sources added.

Karak security chief honours citizen

AMMAN (Petra) — Karak Public Security Department Director Colonel Awwad Khreisha Tuesday honoured a citizen for his role in helping the police arrest three thieves involved in a number of thefts from pharmacies and supermarkets. Col. Khreisha expressed his appreciation to Mohammad Yassin Mahadin for his cooperation.

what's going on

LECTURE
* "Contemporary Spain and European Integration" (in English) by Fernando Gracia de los Fayos at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS
* Paintings by Salah Abu Shakra, Shadia Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 553-0358), until March 19.
* Works by Sam Kayyash at Orient Gallery, Shmeissan (Tel. 568-3034), until March 26.
* Procession will go to Al-Quds Al-Sharif Defending Association.

THEATRE
* The Spanish Comedians Group, at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman (Tel. 510-855), until March 28.
* Works by Lotman and Gogol, at Jabel Amman (Tel. 463-5512), until March 28.
* Works by Lotman and Gogol, at Jabel Amman (Tel. 463-5512), until March 28.

MOVIES
* German film "Im Kreis der Lichen" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe Institut, Jabel Amman at 7:00 p.m.
* Children's film "The Famous Five (Five on a Treasure Island)" at the British Council, Jabel Amman at 5:00 p.m.
* Document for Every thing at Instituto Cervantes, Jabel Amman on Thursday March 12 at 5:00 p.m.
* From Raphael to Caravaggio — the Renaissance 1500 AD at Dar Al-Funun, Jabel Amman on Thursday March 12 at 5:30 p.m. (pre-sent and commented on by Dr. Ahmad Asfard).



ISLAMIC BANK PRESIDENT TOURS JUST: The president of the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank, Ahmad Mohammad Ali, Tuesday is briefed by Jordan Islamic University for Science and Technology (JUST) President Sa'd Hijazi on the university's development. Dr. Ali later toured the campus (Petra photo)

Agriculture ministry preparing for possible locust infestation

AMMAN (J.T.) — In the light of reports on swarms of desert locusts in Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Agriculture has taken precautionary measures to deal with the pests should they enter Jordanian territory. Minister of Agriculture Mijhem Khreisha announced Tuesday.

The ministry, in conjunction with the Jordan Armed Forces and other concerned departments, has prepared a comprehensive plan to combat the locusts and has opened a central operations room on duty 24 hours a day to coordinate the fight against the pests, said the minister.

The ministry has received notification from the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and a Jeddah-based agricultural pest centre that 48 swarms of desert locusts invaded Saudi territory from Sudan.

Egypt and the Horn of Africa countries and that some of the swarms have already laid eggs in several areas of Saudi Arabia. Mr. Khreisha said.

He warned that the pests are extremely dangerous to agriculture since they can consume huge amounts of crops in a very short time.

The FAO has established a special commission in the Near East for controlling desert locusts.

Noting that the Ministry of Agriculture will be closely cooperating with the FAO centre, the minister said the Kingdom has been divided into two categories. The first covers areas in the eastern and southern areas of the country and the semi-desert regions there. He said the ministry has recruited special teams to survey these areas for any sign of a locust invasion.

The second category covers the agricultural lands in the rest of the country, including the governorates of Irbid, Balqa, Mafrqa, Zarqa and Amman, according to the minister.

Referring to the assistance from the Armed Forces, the minister said they will provide pesticide-spraying equipment and conduct aerial surveillance of regions susceptible to locusts. Army helicopters will be in charge of providing search and rescue missions, while the Public Security Department will recruit units from the badia and border police to conduct surveillance and send teams to combat the pests, he added.

Mr. Khreisha said the ministry is confident in its ability to deal with the locusts before they infest the Kingdom's agricultural lands.

India's Hindu nationalists called to form government

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's Hindu nationalists were Tuesday invited by the country's president to form a government, party officials said.

The nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), the largest party from the deadlocked national election, was called by President K.R. Narayanan.

Atal Behari Vajpayee, the party's prime ministerial candidate, was expected to stake his party's official claim for power at 8:00 p.m. (1430 GMT) Tuesday at the presidential palace.

Senior party leader K.R. Govindacharya confirmed the president's invitation. He told AFP: "We have the sufficient numbers and we are sure we can provide a stable government."

The right-wing BJP, accused by rivals of being a threat to India's secular constitution, won 178 out of 545 seats in the polls in the world's largest democracy.

Its alliance with more than a dozen other disparate parties, it commands 263 seats, just short of a majority.

The nationalists, who hope to come to power for the first time at the head of a majority government, have been trying to woo small parties and independents since the fourth and last phase of balloting on March 7.

India is looking for its fifth government within two years.

BJP spokesman R.K. Sinha added that the party's candidate prime minister would probably take the oath of office on March 15.

"We will form a coalition government, a government of consensus. We are formulating a national agenda which will have the backing of all friendly parties," he said.

The United News of India (UNI) reported that the president's letter to Mr. Vajpayee said: "In so far as yours is the single largest party in the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) and the largest pre-election alliance, I request you to let me know whether you are able and willing to form a stable government which

can secure the confidence of the house."

UNI said Mr. Narayanan also congratulated Mr. Vajpayee.

The Congress (141 seats), which gambled on Sonia Gandhi, widow of former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi as its campaign figurehead, emerged as the second largest party from the polls.

The outgoing United Front minority coalition, made up of more than a dozen parties, came third with 96 seats.

The two, both bitterly opposed to the nationalists, had considered an anti-BJP alliance but talks failed. They had successfully formed a partnership after 1996 polls to block the BJP.

The Congress ruled India for around 45 of 50 years since independence, led for most of that period by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

The BJP had tried to form a government after the 1996 elections but, with no prospect of a majority, quit within a fortnight.

The BJP has said it is giving "second thoughts" to

certain controversial policies to try to woo potential allies.

BJP spokesman K.L. Sharma said the party accepted it would have to soften their stance to achieve "consensus among all."

The party conceded that three of its most controversial manifesto pledges could be left out of a coalition policy statement.

Those pledges include plans to build a Hindu temple on the site of a mosque destroyed by Hindu fanatics at Ayodhya six years ago and the drafting of uniform civil laws concerning marriage, divorce and inheritance.

Such laws would be bitterly opposed by the country's Muslims, who make up 125 million of India's total population of 960 million.

The BJP has also called for the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir to be more closely integrated into India. The territory has sparked two wars between India and Pakistan during the past 50 years.



Indonesian students cheer speakers during a demonstration at a Jakarta university. The students called for an end to political corruption on the day that President Suharto was reelected for a seventh five-year term as the leader of Indonesia's 200 million people (Reuters photo)

Thousands of Indonesian students protest Suharto reappointment

JAKARTA (AFP) — Thousands of Indonesian students greeted President Suharto's reappointment to a seventh consecutive term Tuesday with noisy but peaceful demonstrations across the country.

Tight security was in force at many of the campuses, but troops and riot police did not intervene as authorities remained tolerant of demonstrations within university grounds.

However, nine people were arrested when police raided a meeting of pro-democracy activists held shortly after Mr. Suharto was returned to office, their supporters said.

The nine were taken away after some 50 people gathered for the meeting at a seaside bungalow in northern Jakarta, they added.

At the private National Development University here, some 200 students protested Mr. Suharto's return to office, a university staff member said.

"They are demonstrating over the general assembly," he added.

Students waved banners including slogans saying: "The general assembly without interruption, (is a) stupid MPR," a reference to the People's Consultative Assembly or MPR which handed Mr. Suharto another five-year term Tuesday.

At the Christian University of Indonesia, more than 100 students were marching around their eastern Jakarta campus carrying a chair

draped with a red cloth and inscribed with the slogan: "The result of manipulation, protest is forbidden."

More than 1,000 students also rallied peacefully in front of the library building of the state Teachers University here, a witness said.

In the East Java province capital of Surabaya, some 1,000 students rallied at the state Airlangga University, shouting "We reject the election of Suharto," a witness said.

Four truckloads of anti-riot police backed by armed soldiers were guarding the campus' three main gates, the witness said.

Rallies also took place at the Surabaya Institute of Technology and at the 17th of August University.

In the West Sumatra province capital of Padang, more than 1,000 Bung Hatta University students rallied for about two hours, demanding reforms and protesting Mr. Suharto's reappointment, a resident said.

In a statement read at the rally, they delivered a no-confidence motion against the country's legislatures, including the electoral committee meeting, saying they "have changed function, into one that provides legitimacy to the power" and were "irresponsible to the people's aspirations."

"Is this a republic or is this a kingdom?" one of the posters said.

More than 1,000 students at

the Islamic University of Bandung and the University of Pasundan joined forces in the West Java province capital of Bandung and rallied on a street in front of the Islamic institution's campus to protest Mr. Suharto's reappointment and call for reforms, a security guard said.

A rally was also held at the state Bandung Institute of Technology, involving at least 3,000 students who demanded urgent reforms including in the country's leadership, a witness said.

In the South Sulawesi province capital of Ujungpandang, hundreds of students rallied for a second consecutive day at the University of 45, named after the year Indonesia declared independence.

They gathered at the front of the university, occupying part of a main road linking the city to an airport but traffic could still go through, a university staff member said.

In Denpasar, capital of the resort island of Bali, thousands of students, university staff and alumni marched at the Udayana State University.

They demanded political and economic reforms, as well as a change of leadership, the Suara Pembaruan evening daily said.

Scores of such demonstrations have been held in recent weeks. Riots over soaring prices and shortages of basic goods have also rocked dozens of towns and cities this year.

Hong Kong rejects charges human rights eroded under China

HONG KONG (AFP) — Hong Kong's government Tuesday rejected charges that the rights of Hong Kong people had been eroded since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule last July.

Home Affairs Secretary David Lan said in a statement the protection of human rights and press freedom under terms of the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution, had been a priority for the administration.

"The proof is there for all to see in the way that the political process has continued to function freely, vigorously and openly and in the way the media has robustly exercised its role in reflecting the diverse views of this multi-faceted community," Mr. Lan said.

"We have a very good human rights record in Hong Kong, and we intend to keep it that way. The community would expect us to do no less."

The International Federation of Human Rights Leagues Tuesday charged that rights had been eroded in Hong Kong following the return of the territory to Chinese rule and urged "great vigilance."

The federation, in a report issued in Paris, referred to the whittling away of legal guarantees of rights and

freedoms and it underlined that ultimate power over the Special Administrative Region (SAR) now resides with the National People's Congress in Beijing.

Faced with dwindling rights, the report advocated "great vigilance ... particularly in view of the fact the limitations of rights and liberties are of an insidious nature which is not always immediately apparent, but which is no less dangerous because of that."

Mr. Lan responded: "Political protest is alive and well in Hong Kong. So is press freedom."

He said there had been more than 1,000 demonstrations and public protests since the July 1 handover. The statement said the demonstrations had been policed the same way they had been prior to the change of sovereignty.

"Demonstrations are a daily event in Hong Kong," Mr. Lan said.

"They are part of our political culture, just as they are in other free societies," he said.

Referring to recent public debate on the role of the government funded broadcaster Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), Mr. Lan said the editorial independence of the station had been reaffirmed.

Chinese leaders in Beijing

had also reaffirmed the Basic Law's protection of press freedom in the SAR, Mr. Lan said.

He said in his statement the interest in the question of human rights in Hong Kong by the local and international communities was understandable.

Mr. Lan said the protection of Hong Kong people's human rights and civil liberties had been entrenched in the Basic Law through the application of the international covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights.

"The SAR government is committed to abiding by these constitutional obligations," Mr. Lan said.

The home affairs bureau said earlier Tuesday that Beijing had informed the United Nations that Hong Kong would be submitting its first reports under the two covenants in August.

"We are seeking public input into the preparation of these reports," Mr. Lan said.

Mr. Lan noted Chinese President Jiang Zemin had Monday asked Hong Kong deputies to the National People's Congress meeting in Beijing not to interfere in the territory's affairs, stressing the importance of "one country-two systems" and the concept of Hong Kong people ruling themselves.

71 China Airlines officials to be sacked for Taiwan fatal crash

TAIPEI (AFP) — The Taiwanese government has called on China Airlines (CAL) to carry out a widespread staff shake-up after the island's worst-ever air disaster killing 202 people, officials said Tuesday.

The transportation and communications ministry has asked the former flag-carrier to lay off 71 officials including the national carrier's Honorary Chairman Wu Yueh, they said.

Under pressure from the ministry "CAL Chairman Chiang Hung-Yi promised to review the personnel problem," a CAL official said, adding the reshuffle still had to have final approval from the board of directors.

Those facing the axe include three senior flight security officials and advisors from here and abroad.

A CAL Airbus passenger aircraft ploughed into a row of civilian houses outside Chiang Kai-Shek airport on Feb. 16 killing 196 crew and passengers and six others on the ground.

The cause of the fatal crash remains to be investigated.

The Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) Saturday announced the creation of a special task force to direct and supervise CAL reforms.

"The special task force would stay with China Airlines for at least one year to conduct daily reviews and inspections of the company's safety controls," CAA Director-General Tsai Tui said.

He added every CAL pilot would be evaluated monthly and those failing the evaluation would immediately be fired.

CAL's total turnover for 1997 was expected to rise 5.7 per cent to 55.8 billion Taiwan dollars (\$1.69 billion).

Local analysts said it was "unlikely" that the company would meet the targeted \$65.8 billion for 1998 after the disaster.

U.S. protests Laos dissident death in prison

HANOI (AFP) — The U.S. Embassy in Vientiane said Tuesday it regretted the death of a Laos dissident in prison, who was denied proper medical treatment.

"The United States particularly regrets the death in prison of Thongsouk Saisangkhi because we raised his fragile medical condition a number of times with all levels of the Laos government," a U.S. embassy spokesperson said.

The embassy said it had been informed by the Laos Foreign Ministry that Thongsouk died last month of complications related to diabetes.

"We urged the Laos government to assure that he received adequate medical care, including if necessary transferring him to a prison in Vientiane where he could have had access to better medical care," she said.

According to other diplomatic sources, Thongsouk died on Feb. 10 in Prison Camp 7, which lacked proper medical facilities in

the remote province of Houa Phan.

The U.S. government, which has raised human rights issues with Laos at every possible opportunity also deplored "the arrest of individuals who are seeking to express peacefully their political views," the spokesperson said.

"We call upon the Laos government to release all those held for the peaceful expression of their political views," the spokesperson said.

Amnesty International said that two others imprisoned for their political views.

Feng Sakchittaphong and Laisami Khamphoui, were seriously ill and in need of medical treatment.

The U.S. spokesman said the embassy and representatives of other foreign missions in Vientiane had "raised the issue of the three political prisoners with the highest levels of the Laos government on numerous occasions since the prisoners' incarceration."

With Thongsouk now dead, amnesty said the Laos authorities should ensure that the same fate does not befall the other two.

"It is too late for Thongsouk and his family, but how much more suffering do Feng Sakchittaphong and Laisami Khamphoui and their families have to undergo before the Laos authorities give them the medical treatment they need," it said in a statement issued out of its London office.

Thongsouk, 59, was arrested in 1990 after reportedly advocating a multiparty system in Laos. He was serving a 14-year sentence handed down in 1992.

Before his arrest, Thongsouk held senior positions in the Laos government. He was vice minister of communications, transportation and posts from 1985 to 1990 when he became vice minister of science and technology shortly before his arrest.

Aborigines launch sorry day for stolen children

SYDNEY (R) —

Australia's key aboriginal leader Tuesday made an impassioned plea for Prime Minister John Howard to officially apologise to aboriginal children taken from their parents under past assimilation policies.

"The defence of ignorance is no longer available," said Gaijil Djerrkura, chairman of the aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commission, in announcing a national "Sorry Day" on May 26 for all Australians to apologise to aborigines.

"It (an apology) is absolutely crucial. It costs nothing. It means so much. That is why the federal government must apologise," said Mr. Djerrkura, the country's most powerful aboriginal leader.

"They have to open the way for forgiveness and this can only start with an apology."

Mr. Howard has expressed his personal sorrow for the "stolen generation" of aborigines taken from their parents under assimilation policies, but has refused to issue a formal apology on behalf of his government.

Mr. Howard opposes a formal apology because of concerns it might expose his government to compensation claims from aborigines and has accused pro-aboriginal supporters of promoting a biased "black armband" view of Australian history.

A 1997 report by the Australian Human Rights Commission found that the forced removal of tens of thousands of aboriginal children from their parents between the 1880s and 1960s was "systematic racial discrimination and genocide."

It said the "stolen generation" or "people of the bleaching" deserved a government apology and compensation.

On the shore of Sydney's Botany Bay near the landing site of Britain's Captain James Cook, who claimed Australia for Britain in 1770, local Dharawal aborigines Tuesday performed a traditional "smoking" ceremony to launch "sorry day."

Under aboriginal culture smoking gum leaves cleanses evil spirits. Young Dharawal men also performed dances, animating kangaroos and emus, to tell the story of their ancestors.

"The smoking ceremony and dancers are reminders of the living culture of our people," said Evelyn Scott, chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.

"They bear witness to the strengths and defiance of those who have survived the past policies of dispossession and removal," she said.

Ms. Scott also called for an apology in welcoming

"sorry day" that will see ceremonies across Australia where people can say sorry to aborigines and celebrate in aboriginal culture.

There are an estimated 300,000 aborigines in Australia's 18 million population.

Last week Amnesty International criticised the government for not apologising to the "stolen generation". It said the government's inadequate handling of the 1997 human rights report reflected its "overall disinterest in human rights over the past year."

Mr. Djerrkura said the history of aboriginal suffering was real and was still affecting aborigines today.

"As Australians we cannot afford to ignore history and we must know the real history of this country. It is not a black armband view of history — it is one based on truth."

Mr. Djerrkura said there was now a groundswell of popular support for aboriginal issues such as the "stolen generation", citing thousands of signatures of white Australians in "sorry books" around the country.

"Truth does not require you to wallow in guilt and my people are not asking you to wallow in guilt. But truth does require you to listen and to acknowledge," he said.

Chile's Pinochet leaving army but not public life

SANTIAGO (R) — Chile's former strongman Gen. Augusto Pinochet retired Tuesday as commander in chief of the army after 24 years in the post but will defy critics to keep a high political profile as an unelected senator.

The 82-year-old Gen. Pinochet, who ruled Chile from 1973 to 1990 after ousting Socialist President Salvador Allende, was to end his long military career in a stylish private ceremony, and parade at Santiago's Military School.

After the short ceremony, at which only Gen. Pinochet was scheduled to speak to avoid fuelling protest, the white-haired general was to be free to take up a lifelong, unelected seat in the country's senate — a privilege he wrote into the constitution in 1980.

President Eduardo Frei and his closest cabinet ministers, alongside top-ranking military officials from Chile and abroad, were invited to attend the farewell ceremony, which began at 10:30 a.m.

Gen. Pinochet will be succeeded by Gen. Ricardo Izurieta, a virtual unknown outside Chilean military circles.

The man whom friends and foes alike call "the gentleman" — either out of respect or sarcastically from dislike — met with Mr. Frei inside the Moneda presidential palace Monday to discuss arrangements for Tuesday's retirement ceremony and grand military parade.

Gen. Pinochet entered via a secret passage he built while in power.

The two men touched on how to reduce tensions over the general's decision to move to the senate, Mr. Frei, who heads a centre-left coalition government, has opposed the senate move, and anti-Pinochet activists plan marches and protests against a man they accuse of human rights abuses, including torture and kidnapping, during his 17-year rule.

Some 3,000 people died or vanished during that period. Tens of thousands more, especially left-wing sympathisers, fled the country, fearing the military apparatus that clamped down on political activism in the years after the coup.

Gen. Pinochet banned political parties, shut down congress and implemented a nightly curfew that lasted more than a decade.

Senate Chairman Sergio Romero announced last week that Gen. Pinochet would be sworn in as a senator Wednesday, ending speculation about when he would officially take up his seat.

Always the military tactician, Gen. Pinochet had kept the country guessing on the date on which he planned to travel to the senate to change roles. The upper house is on the coast in Valparaiso, 88 miles northwest of Santiago.

Protests against Gen. Pinochet were expected to peak Tuesday and Wednesday. Opponents, mainly from the left-wing parties and organisations that bore the brunt of excesses committed during Gen. Pinochet's regime, have formed what they call the wide front.

Street demonstrations are scheduled in Santiago and Valparaiso, where members of the protest group families of the detained disappeared plan to form a human chain around the senate to prevent Gen. Pinochet from entering the building.

Opponents have slammed Mr. Frei's government for allowing Gen. Pinochet to take up a senate seat, saying it makes a sham of the democratic system and permits Gen. Pinochet to remain in the limelight in his old age.

Mr. Frei has always opposed Gen. Pinochet's entry into the upper house. But right-wingers and other designated senators, unwilling to give up the privilege, have enough votes to block any constitutional amendments to abolish unelected seats.

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SINGAPORE (AFP) —
Investigators of a Singapore
jetliner's crash in Indonesia said
Tuesday they could not rule out
pilot suicide but had found no
evidence to back this theory and
stressed all scenarios were
being checked.
"We haven't ruled out any-
thing," said Oetario Ditan, the
Indonesian chief investigator of
the Dec. 19 SilkAir crash which
left 104 people dead, the worst
commercial aviation disaster in
Singapore's history.
Mr. Ditan was reacting to a
report Tuesday in the Asian
Wall Street Journal that the
international team of investiga-
tors was exploring the possibility
that one of the Boeing 737-
300 plane's two pilots might
have willfully caused the crash.
All 97 passengers and seven
crew perished when SilkAir
flight M1185 plunged into the
Musi River on Sumatra Island
after inexplicably nose-diving
in clear weather while en route
from Jakarta to Singapore.
Pressed in a previously sched-
uled news conference about the
suicide theory, Mr. Ditan, the
chairman of Indonesia's
Aircraft Accident Investigation
Commission said: "At this time
we have found no indication
that there is a straight connec-
tion between what you suggest-
ed and the factual data that we
found."
Greg Feith of the U.S.
National Transportation Safety
Board, which is part of the
investigation, said the pilot-sui-
cide report, which followed
similar stories in the aviation
industry press, was "an assump-
tion based on some information
that they've received."
Mr. Ditan said a team includ-
ing psychiatrists was routinely
looking into the "human perfor-
mance aspects" of the crash but
others involved in the flight,
including air traffic controllers,
aircraft maintenance staff and
cargo handlers, were also being
background-checked.
The inquiry, including inter-
views with next of kin and asso-
ciates, involves family life, per-
sonal habits, financial standing
and medical records in the year
before the crash.
Mr. Ditan stressed that "we're
doing all personnel, not only the
pilots."
The reports on the suicide the-
ory centred on the actions of
chief pilot Captain Tsu Way
Ming, a former Singapore Air
Force elite aerobatics flyer.
One investigator confirmed
Tsu was removed as a line train-
ing captain, who might pilot
about SilkAir's "company cul-
ture," after "some internal
reports from fellow crew" about
him "a couple of months"
before the crash.
Asked about reports that Tsu
was unhappy about the deci-
sion, Tan Wei Lee of the Civil
Aviation Authority of Singa-
pore (CAAS) said: "I don't think
there'll be anybody in this world
that will be overjoyed if they are
removed from that position."
He declined to give details
about the internal reports on Tsu.
On reports that one of the
pilots had mounting debts, Mr.
Ditan said "we are exploring it."
But Mr. Ditan said conversa-
tions between Tsu and his New
Zealand first officer, Duncan
Ward, were normal until the
cockpit voice recorder stopped
working, and their conversation
"contradicts that other data that
you might think might link this
up with something that has been
rumoured in the press."
Asked about the possibility of
a missile or collision, Mr. Ditan
said there was "no indication of
an explosive force, either from
within or without" the 10-
month-old aircraft.
Accounts from villagers near
the crash site about explosions
as the plane was coming down
should be "taken with some
grain of salt," Mr. Ditan said.
About 70 per cent of the air-
craft has been recovered and the
bits and pieces are being put
together in a hangar in Indone-
sia.

World News

Pilot suicide not ruled out in SilkAir crash but no evidence — probers



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (right) meets Defence Minister Igor Sergeev who said crime was rising in Russia's hard-pressed armed forces and suggested they could be penetrated by mafia-type groups (Reuters photo)

Russian defence chief warns of critical army indiscipline

MOSCOW (AFP) — Law and order in the Russian armed forces has broken down to the extent that the military could fall prey to organised crime, Defence Minister Igor Sergeev said Tuesday.

Mr. Sergeev told a special session of the military leadership devoted to problems of discipline that the situation had reached "critical" levels both in terms of the number of offences and their severity, ITAR-TASS reported.

"There is the very real threat of organised crime breaking through into the ranks of the military," particularly given the growing crime rate in society in general, Mr. Sergeev was quoted as saying.

"Today the problem of law and order in the armed forces has assumed a nationwide scope," he said, stressing that discipline in the military was essential to the success of a wide-ranging programme to reform and streamline the Russian army.

President Boris Yeltsin discussed the reform programme with his new security chief Andrei Kokoshin Tuesday, Interfax reported.

The ambitious programme provides for troop numbers to be cut by 500,000 to 1.2 million by the end of 1998, and for conscription to be abolished in an effort to create an efficient, mobile, professional army.

Military experts say that targets set by the government are over-ambitious, and the army will struggle to finance such a major overhaul.

Desertions, murder and suicides are now common in the crisis-ridden Russian army, where young conscripts are frequently ill-treated by senior troops. Some 40,000 young men refused to do their military service last year.

Japanese minister calls for end to classroom stabbings

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Education Minister Nobutaka Machimura appealed to children Tuesday to drop their weapons as a wave of school stabbings rocked the country.

"There has been a series of knife-stabbing cases," Mr. Machimura said in a statement to children carried on public television a day after a 13-year-old was knifed to death in school.

"Please realise how deep the sorrows are of the fathers and mothers of dead or injured people," the minister said in the statement, read out at a news conference.

"Hurting people or depriving them of their lives can never be forgiven. Those who have lost their lives will never come back. Let's stop carrying knives any more," he said.

In a separate address, the minister urged parents to "take full responsibility for your children's actions" and called on educators to "teach children the importance of life."

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto told reporters that "this is truly a deplorable situation... I don't know what to say."

The juvenile crime wave is an embarrassment for Mr. Hashimoto, who in his New Year's speech in 1997 added education to his much-touted reform programme covering financial and other sectors.

"I am shocked and deeply concerned," said Chief Cabinet Secretary Kanezo Muraoka.

"Not only educational reform but also what kind of society we should have is being questioned," he said.

A string of assaults and stabbings rocked the country Tuesday, just a day after death of the 13-year-old, Makoto Kato, during a break in lessons at his school in Saitama, north of Tokyo.

Another 13-year-old has been detained.

In Aichi, central Japan, a 14-year-old boy was arrested for the stabbing of another pupil, who was seriously wounded.

The boy suddenly stabbed his classmate in the back of the head with a 17-centimetre cooking knife that he brought from home to retaliate for a beating he received the previous day, police said.

Police also arrested a 15-year-old boy in the southern prefecture of Okinawa, alleging he hit, kicked and stabbed a 13-year-old at a friend's home.

They quoted the assailant as saying he attacked the younger boy because he had picked a quarrel by "behaving rudely."

In Kanagawa near Tokyo, police said they arrested a 16-year-old building apprentice suspected of stabbing and injuring a 17-year-old acquaintance in the stomach with a 17-centimetre knife.

And in Kyoto in western Japan, a 17-year-old youth tried to snatch an officer's handgun after entering a police station saying he had lost his wallet.

The youth punched the officer in the stomach as he prepared to make a report on the missing wallet.

"I want a gun. I want to kill myself with a gun," the boy was quoted as saying as he was overcome by other officers.

Rising juvenile crime across the nation has led to calls for a rethink about society's values.

An impromptu survey by the National Police Agency said that since the start of the year there had been 31 cases of murder, robbery or injury involving knives wielded by schoolchildren.

Susumu Oda, a psychologist at International University of Health and Welfare, said children needed more discipline and schools should inspect pupils' personal effects.

"Those who advocate morals tend to be scorned in this country recently," he said, adding that authorities could not take action for fear of breaching the human rights of minors.

"Everybody praises human rights, just like we praised the emperor (in war-time Japan)," he said.

A Japanese court last month sent a 13-year-old boy to reform school for stabbing his teacher to death when she scolded him for being late.

Only six days after the fatal stabbing, a 15-year-old boy attempted to stab a policeman to get his gun in Tokyo.

In May 1997, the nation was shocked when a 14-year-old boy murdered and beheaded an 11-year-old boy and killed another 10-year-old girl with a hammer in Kobe, western Japan.

Lack of understanding almost ends Hefner marriage

LOS ANGELES (R) — Kimberly Hefner, 34-year-old second wife of magazine founder Hugh Hefner, filed for divorce Monday but the couple quickly called it a mistake.

"This filing took place in a moment of misunderstanding. We are still exploring a reconciliation, and neither of us wants a divorce," the couple said in a statement released by Playboy Enterprises Inc.

A spokeswoman said the divorce filing would "definitely" be withdrawn. Lawyers for Kimberly Hefner could not immediately be reached for comment.

Mr. Hefner, 71, and his wife said in January that they intended to separate but that they remained close and maintained "hope of a possible reconciliation."

A statement cited differing interests for the separation and said Kimberly Hefner — a former Playmate of the Year — would live on property adjoining the Playboy mansion west. The couple married in 1989 and have two children, Marston, seven, and Cooper, six.

Germany's Stoiber says Kohl welcome in Bavaria

BONN (R) — Bavaria's Premier Edmund Stoiber Tuesday dismissed as "nonsense" efforts by some conservatives to keep Chancellor Helmut Kohl out of the election campaign in the southern German state.

But Mr. Stoiber said Mr. Kohl should concentrate on domestic issues such as unemployment and crime-fighting ahead of September's federal election rather than talk to voters about such "abstract" issues as the single European currency.

Mr. Stoiber's Christian Social Union (CSU), arch-conservative sister party to Mr. Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU), said Mr. Kohl was their candidate. The CSU leaders who had urged the unpopular chancellor to stay out of Bavaria had made a mistake, he said.

"That would be absolute nonsense," Mr. Stoiber told German radio when asked if the CSU would ban Mr. Kohl from campaigning in Bavaria.

The CSU is fighting to maintain its majority in Bavaria, where the state election will be held on Sept. 13, two weeks before the federal election where Mr. Kohl will try to win an unprecedented fifth term as chancellor.

The CSU did not want to schedule their election on the same date as the federal election because of fears unpopular federal policies would hurt their chances at the state level.

"He is our chancellor candidate," Mr. Stoiber said. "These were over-reactions and mistakes made by individual colleagues in the CSU. That is not the way the CSU as a whole feels."

Following a crushing defeat by the CDU in a state election in lower Saxony earlier this month, several CSU leaders had urged Mr. Kohl to stay away from Bavaria. Mr. Kohl, slumping in opinion polls, had campaigned extensively in Lower Saxony.

"The chancellor can look after Germany," said CSU committee member Markus Soeder said Sunday. "In Bavaria he should not schedule any appearances. We don't need him here."

Several CSU leaders have made similar remarks in recent days.

Mr. Stoiber, who has quarrelled with Mr. Kohl in the past about the euro, said domestic issues were going to be the focus of the campaign. He said people are more interested in domestic issues at the moment than about European integration.

"Everyone agrees that domestic issues are at the forefront of the public discussion," Mr. Stoiber said. "These are the central issues that affect people more directly than the distant, abstract issues of European integration."

After the Lower Saxony debacle, CSU members told Mr. Kohl to stay home during the campaign and concentrate on domestic issues rather than rely on his foreign policy achievements and reputation as a European statesman to swing voters.

Mr. Stoiber added that there was no point in playing the domestic issues off against the foreign policies issues, but he pointed out that all the major decisions on European integration had already been made.

"It is more important now, that all the decisions have been taken, that we concentrate on what we can do on a national level to lower unemployment," Mr. Stoiber said. German unemployment has been stuck near post-war highs of 12.6 per cent.

Oscar nominees applaud each other

BEVERLY HILLS, California (R) — The nominees for the Oscars posed for a group photograph Monday and then did something people are supposed to do a lot of in Hollywood — enjoy a long, leisurely lunch.

Jack Nicholson took off his jacket, Kim Basinger looked smashing in a red suit, like she just walked off the set of "L.A. Confidential" and... Curtis Hanson, the director of that Oscar-nominated film, provoked laughs when he mused about his film's chances against "Titanic."

Asked at a news conference prior to the annual nominees luncheon if it was a foregone conclusion that "Titanic" would win the Oscar for best picture, Hanson replied: "You know it was a foregone conclusion that the ship would go to New York. There are a lot of great movies out there and we'll see what happens."

"Titanic's" chances of winning the record-tying 14 Oscars for which it is nominated were a subject of discussion at many tables at the annual Oscars nominees luncheon, with some Hollywood insiders privately predicting "icebergs up ahead" for what has become the world's most popular film.

The film has grossed more than \$1 billion since it opened 12 weeks ago, causing some to call the \$200 million epic the "Gone with the Wind" of its generation.

"There may be a backlash because of all the publicity," said one veteran studio executive, while his wife vigorously shook her head in disagreement.

But whatever one's thoughts of the film's chances come March 23 — the day when Oscars are handed out at a televised ceremony expected to be seen by one billion people worldwide — there was one member of the cast who seemed a clear sentimental favourite.

Gloria Stuart, an 87-year-old actress who plays the narrator recalling the disaster, received tremendous applause when she picked up her nomination certificate at the luncheon at the Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel.

Earlier she told reporters she was not going to make any predictions or even say if she wanted to win. "I don't like contests. I'd like to see the whole group honoured," she said, adding that would be an ideal way to avoid such questions.

But she added: "Am I nervous? Yes."

Gil Cates, the producer of the Oscar show, gave his annual speech urging nominees to keep their acceptance speeches short and sweet.

He said 35 to 45 seconds should be enough to thank everyone needed and added that thanking the high school janitor was not necessary.

Japan holds up arrival of nuclear shipment from France

ROKKASHO, Japan (AFP) — Local Japanese authorities Tuesday barred a ship carrying French nuclear waste from docking here in a row over radioactive shipments.

Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd., in charge of receiving the reprocessed nuclear waste, said it would postpone the ship's entry for at least a day due to the refusal from the governor of Aomori prefecture, site of the port.

"We gave up today's entry because we do not have permission from the Aomori prefecture," said Yukihiko Ito, a spokesman for the company. "But we will proceed with the docking of the ship as soon as we have permission."

Aomori Governor Morio Kimura refused entry permission after Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto turned down his request for talks over the nation's nuclear policy, officials said.

"We are not at a stage where we can allow the ship to berth at the port," Mr. Kimura was quoted as telling a meeting earlier in the day with officials from the prefecture.

The British-flagged ship entered Japanese waters early in the day and had been scheduled to dock at Mutsu Ogawara port in the village of Rokkasho, on the northern tip of Japan's main island Honshu.

But because of the governor's objection, the ship anchored for several hours some five kilometres off the port before moving just outside Japanese territorial waters.

"The vessel has left the Japanese territorial waters," said an official at the Aomori prefectural government. "We cannot give the exact location, but it is not far from the port," he said.

Some 100 protesters staged a rally near the port against the entry, carrying banners which read: "Don't produce it, don't carry it and don't throw it away here."

The waste is to be stored in Rokkasho for 30 to 50 years before being transferred to a permanent underground site in a location yet to be decided.

"The Japanese government currently has no site for a final repository and the governor is concerned that Aomori will become the de facto final disposal site unless nuclear waste policy is clarified by the government," said a statement by Japan's Stop Nuclear Waste Campaign.

"Without the governor's permission, the ship cannot enter the port," said Kazuyasu Uehara, a senior official of the prefecture's port and airport management bureau.

"But we are not sure whether the governor's decision is temporary or final," he added.

Mr. Kimura has threatened to stop the freighter from berthing at the port if the prime minister refuses to discuss the nation's nuclear-safety policy and economic aid for the prefecture in the form of reduced electricity charges.

He held talks Monday with Science and Technology Agency chief Sadakazu Tanigaki and International Trade and Industry Minister Mitsuo Horiuchi in Tokyo, but failed to get a meeting with Mr. Hashimoto.

Officials of six government ministries and agencies concerned held a meeting but failed to come to a conclusion on how to break the impasse, an official at the science and technology agency said.

The governor told reporters he may lift the objection if he can hold talks with Mr. Hashimoto.

But central government officials said the prime minister had no plans to arrange any meeting with the governor.

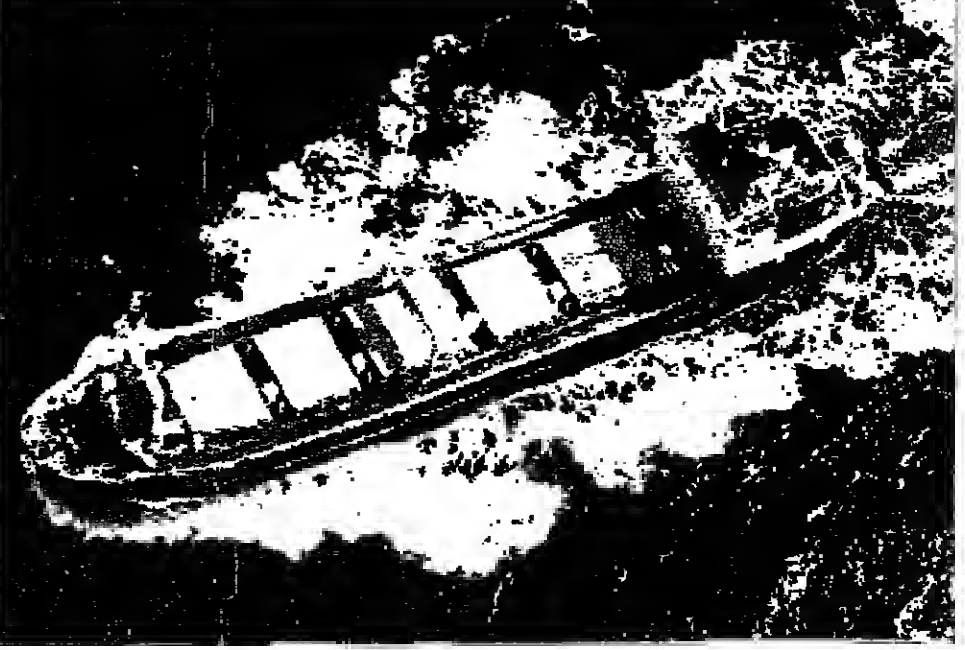
"Do you think I really had time to meet the governor?" Jiji Press quoted Mr. Hashimoto as saying, citing his tight parliamentary and diplomatic schedules.

The Pacific Swan freighter set out from the northern French port of Cherbourg on Jan. 21 with about 30 tonnes of high-level nuclear waste, which is from spent nuclear fuel Japan sends to France for reprocessing.

The 50,000-tonne ship, owned by the British company PNTL, is carrying three containers packed with canisters of vitrified waste.

The shipment is the third of its kind to Japan under a processing agreement signed between French nuclear energy firm COGEMA and 10 Japanese electricity-generating companies.

The first shipment operation, which was delayed by several hours, involved 28 canisters between February and April, 1995, and the second involved 40 canisters between January and March last year.



The fifty-thousand-tonne British-flagged Pacific Swan, carrying plutonium and hazardous nuclear waste from France to Japan, steams off Mutsu-Ogawara after the region's governor denied it entry to harbour (Reuters photo)

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Cause for optimism

IN TALKS held on Monday and Tuesday in Ramallah and Tel Aviv, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan impressed on President Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Jordan's keenness to see the peace process rejuvenated. The Palestinian leader was openly and warmly appreciative of Jordan's sincere call for a resumption of the peace process by building on what has been achieved so far through the execution of the agreements signed between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Prince Hassan touched on the core of the issue in Ramallah when he said that 1998 is the year of Israeli redeployment from most of the Palestinian areas. Netanyahu concurred on Tuesday. Arafat also said he "listened to the Crown Prince's good advice" and his chief negotiator, Saeb Erekat, added that the Palestinians were ready to discuss the ideas being floated around, especially by the Americans. There is no doubt that Jordan would like the Palestinians to engage the Israelis, bargain with them, accept what is being offered at this stage, and keep pressing for the implementation of all the provisions of the Oslo accords. Engagement is the key word and optimism is its linchpin.

Jordan committed to its peace treaty with Israel and to the achievement of total peace in the region, has a stake in the success of the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks in their initial phase and, by virtue of the Kingdom's vital link to the Palestinian people, is keen on seeing the Oslo accords implemented and final status talks started.

By improving ties with Israel, following the infamous attempt on the life of Hamas leader Khaled Misha'al in Amman in September, Jordan is hoping to set an example for peace-making in the region. By demonstrating to the Israelis that peace is a prerequisite for security, Jordan hopes that it can convince the Israeli people and leadership that the fulfillment of the Palestinians' national aspirations will lead to the security of Israel.

The Crown Prince has made all of this clear, both in Ramallah and Tel Aviv, by reminding his audiences on both sides of the divide to see the proverbial glass half-full and not half-empty and to light a candle instead of cursing the darkness.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Sultan Hattab warned that the situation in the occupied Palestinian lands was deteriorating fast and there was fear of an explosion. While the U.S., the sponsor of the peace process is preoccupied with the Kosovo problem and while Clinton is engaged in dealing with his sex scandals Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pursues his settlement programmes in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli measures coupled with Netanyahu's total disregard of the Oslo accords are placing tremendous pressure on the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) which is confronting the Israeli practices on the one hand and facing rising protests and fundamentalists calls for action in the form of a renewed intifada to combat Israel's policies on the other, said the writer. He said the PNA has secured nothing from the Israelis with which it can convince the Palestinian people of its stand because its hands are tied; and at the same time it is expected by Israel and the U.S. to crack down on the extremist elements that seek confrontation and continued struggle in all forms to secure Palestinian people's rights.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Riham Al Farra criticised a recent call by the patriarch of the Maronite community in Lebanon Nasrallah Steir for the Syrian forces to leave Lebanese territory. The call, as contained in a memorandum sent to Lebanon's Prime Minister Rafik Hariri fell as a bomb shell because it coincided with Israel's declared bid to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon upon certain conditions, said the writer. She said it is a well-known fact that the Syrian troops entered Lebanon upon Beirut's request backed by the Arab League to end the civil strife and protect Lebanon from Israel. But the Israeli forces are occupying the southern regions by force and constantly raiding Lebanon and committing atrocities against that country and its people, noted the writer. Lebanon, she stressed, can not accept Israel's conditional offer to pull out and seeks the unconditional implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 for that matter. But if the Syrian forces are to leave Lebanon, she added, Lebanese territory will serve as an arena for further Israeli acts of aggression on the one hand and the climate will once again be created for the renewal of civil strife inside Lebanon on the other.

Washington Watch

By Dr. James J. Zogby

The world created by Netanyahu

TWENTY-ONE months ago, fresh on the heels of an electoral victory, the Netanyahu government embarked on an ambitious programme to undo the Middle East peace process and reshape Middle East politics.

This Netanyahu effort (which I first described in my September 1996 column) had five major elements:

1. To develop a "new approach to peace."
 This involved replacing the formula of "land for peace" with "peace for peace," by emphasising Israeli security and military strength. According to Netanyahu advisors, Israel would henceforth see negotiations as a "means, not an end" toward pursuing Israeli goals "especially in their territorial dimensions."

2. To "secure the northern border."
 The Netanyahu plan called for "abandoning the slogan 'comprehensive peace'" while moving toward "challenging, isolating, and destabilising Syria." Specifically, the Netanyahu government outright "rejected 'land for peace' deals on the Golan Heights."

3. To move toward a "traditional balance of power."
 Netanyahu and his advisors rejected the Peres vision of a "new Middle East" and sought a regional cold war where they could "redraw the political map of the Middle East." By focusing on the military relationship with Turkey, they hoped to isolate and destabilise Syria and more directly confront Iraq and Iran.

4. To "change the nature of relations with the Palestinians."

The Palestinians were no longer to be seen as partners in peace, but as a hostile and captive presence that had to be contained and controlled. To implement their goals, the Netanyahu government focused on discrediting and delegitimising the Palestinian leadership by emphasising its "failure to comply" in the peace agreements and presenting it as a "repressive, corrupt, and untrustworthy interlocutor" for the Palestinian people.

5. To "forge a new U.S.-Israeli relationship."

Understanding that the Clinton administration would not be supportive of their plans, the Netanyahu groups sought to "manage and contain their reactions" by mobilising their supporters in Congress and the U.S. Jewish organisations. Toward that end, the new Likud government crafted their message to the United States utilising a combination of Reagan-era cold war rhetoric and traditional anti-Arab demagoguery. They resurrected themes like: "peace through strength," "no peace with dictatorship," "the Arab and Muslim terrorist threat," and "only the United States and Israel share common values."

The clear design of this entire campaign was to undercut the Labour-led peace effort, minimise any further Israeli territorial concessions, destabilise and delegitimise those Arab leaders that supported peace, sabotage efforts to create a new regional order, and recreate a Middle East cold war with a strong Israeli military presence at its core. Despite some set-backs to their plans, most notably when the Clinton administration forced an agreement on Hebron, the Netanyahu government has been able to minimise their losses and turn even that agreement to the disadvantage of the Palestinian side.

The results have been quite to their satisfaction. A short 21 months after having taken control of the government by a mere one per cent electoral victory, the Netanyahu government can claim success. As the recent Gulf crisis demonstrated, Israel is once again almost completely isolated in the Middle East. With new massive shipments of the most sophisticated long-range U.S. fighter planes and defensive missiles, Israel is the unquestioned military power in the region. At the same time it is more isolated and insecure (as the recent gas mask panic demonstrated). Palestinians are strangled economically and politically. They are embittered and despairing of ever realising their rights. Meanwhile the Arab leadership that made peace is

feeling exposed and vulnerable facing criticism and domestic unrest.

To a great extent both Saddam Hussein and Benjamin Netanyahu played off of one another. One can reasonably argue, that had the peace process been moving forward toward real justice for Palestinians and a comprehensive peace in compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, it would have been much less complicated to make the regime in Baghdad comply with U.N. inspections. And the issue of the "double standard," so frequently and correctly raised by an angry and frustrated Arab public opinion, would not have resonated so clearly. As it was, with Palestinians in particular, so alienated and despairing, some even demonstrated their support for new missile attacks on Tel Aviv.

This was crudely and cynically exploited by the Netanyahu government. Chami Shalev, the thoughtful Israeli analyst, wrote in February that the crisis with Iraq served Netanyahu perfectly. It allowed him to remind Israelis of how dangerous the Middle East could be and how Arab hatred of Israel was a constant.

Shalev continued, "the Gulf crisis revealed Israel's renewed isolation in the region and its conversion into an element negatively unifying the entire Arab World."

"Netanyahu will say," Shalev concluded, "that the Gulf crisis showed reality as it is. His rivals will reply, however, that without Netanyahu, this reality would not have existed."

The Middle East and the peace process of today are a far cry from what was envisioned a mere four and one-half years ago. It is neither a reflection of reality nor is it the result of bungling. It is a planned creation, implemented by an ideologically-based government that has systematically sought to dismantle peace and resuscitate the cold war of the past. So far, it has been a success.

'Demoralised' Israelis advised to make peace with Arabs

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — Two rare views on Israel were aired in Washington recently, one depicting Israelis as demoralised and the other warning the Jewish state will be better off negotiating a peace settlement with its Arab neighbours at present since its power can only decline over time.

"I never seen the country more demoralised," declared Hirsch Goodman, editor-in-chief of the Jerusalem Report, a semi-monthly Israeli magazine, who has lived in Israel for 33 years. The Israelis are in "a holding pattern, going around and around like a plane hoping to land safely."

Leslie H. Gelb, president of the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations in New York, explained that considering Israel's powerful strategic position, "it has much incentive to negotiate at present because its power can only decline over time."

The two speakers appeared at separate closed sessions last month at the influential Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a leading think-tank here, which usually invites government officials, foreign (including Arab) diplomats, and opinion makers.

The thumbnail sketch provided by Goodman, a former defence correspondent for the Jerusalem Post, painted an uncomplimentary portrait of life in the Jewish state. This was particularly the case during the state of panic that accompanied the mad rush for gas masks at the height of the celebrated standoff with Iraq last month over U.N. arms inspections.

"It is like living in a pressure cooker and unfortunately a pressure cooker with a lot of people who have nothing to say," he described it.

The veteran journalist also provided a graphic picture of Israelis preoccupied with their own security. "Every time a plane flies over Jerusalem and there is a supersonic boom everybody heads for under the table," he said. "It is petrifying."

Goodman underlined that "nothing has settled down in the country ever since" the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli

prime minister, which he saw as "a watershed event."

He then highlighted some of the issues confronting Israel at present. He cited high unemployment figures — "160-170 thousand people are unemployed" — a situation which he noted "is beginning to hurt."

Moreover, he added that the middle class in Israel is suffering on account of a deteriorating health system and a poor educational programme. About 66,000 immigrants are arriving a year, he said, "but 45,000 of these are over age — over 65" precipitating among other things a need for hospital beds and senior citizens homes. This is unlike the "aliya" (ingathering of Jews) of yesteryears when all the immigrants were youthful.

The choice in education, he continued, is to send children to local (public) schools where, he said, there are 40 students to a classroom, "a quarter of whom are going to be Russians, who have inadequate command of Hebrew." The other choice are schools established by Shas, the Israeli ultra-orthodox party.

Goodman said children going through the Shas system are picked up in the morning, given breakfast, lunch and dinner and are returned home in the evening, unlike the public schools. Moreover, since many of these students go through the yeshiva system (religious schools), they are exempt from the army.

Accordingly, he continued, Shas is developing "a constituency in the country today which is going to have serious ramifications down the road." This is a different type of ultra-orthodoxy, he explained, "it is outreach, it is warm and it is socially oriented."

Interestingly, he saw it "very similar to what the mosques were doing in Gaza when Israel made the huge mistake of trying to neutralise the nationalism of the PLO," the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

Goodman appeared concerned not as much about the recent scandals involving the Mossad, Israel's intelligence service, but the leaks to the press by fellow officers

aimed at deposing the head of the much-feared institution. "Never before we had such open criticism of the chief of staff," he continued, "or the head of military intelligence... we now have a new phenomenon — backstabbing — in Israel."

The respected Israeli journalist was, however, partial to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom he acknowledged was walking a tightrope despite the fact that Israeli prime ministers are now "very powerful" since they are elected directly.

If there is an election tomorrow, Goodman said, Netanyahu will be reelected "because the guy is remarkable in his ability to explain away what yesterday seemed to be totally incomprehensible to most people but seems not a bad idea the next morning." He said the Israeli public supports the Netanyahu concept that the Palestinians should provide some quid pro quo.

In reply to questions about the peace process, he advised against "a sledge hammer approach" because this would create chaos. Rather, he thought small steps such as opening the much-delayed Gaza airport or free passage between Gaza and the West Bank are preferable to going directly to final status talks because he said this would be "suicidal." He stated, "the process has to be nurtured to break the psychological gridlock."

In reply to questions, Goodman said Israelis are "more petrified" of Syria than Iraq because the country has "huge capabilities" in chemical and biological warfare. The Israelis are worried by "unmanned aircraft," reportedly developed in the region, and the presence of hundreds of Soviet scientists in Iraq and Iran, where he claimed they are paid handsomely.

Gelb, who spoke a week earlier, suggested "more persuasive arguments" than in the past to convince the Israelis of the peace process. He cautioned: If Israel does not make a serious effort to negotiate, a strong possibility exists that Israel's own national identity and its relationship with the United States will suffer.

"Although the United States is still very

supportive of Israel, and justly so, it is not true that Israel's good standing here is immutable," according to Gelb. "If Israel is regarded as an obstacle to peace, it will affect relations with the United States. It is thus in Israel's best interest to move forward on the negotiating front."

Gelb said it is in Israel's advantage to negotiate at present since its military position is probably at the highest level it will ever be. "In the coming years, certain countries in the Middle East almost surely will produce weapons of mass destruction," he said, "thus creating a balance of terror against Israel's interests."

He offered three "basic" principles to ensure successful negotiations in the future:

— Both parties must keep all existing agreements. "Compliance with past accords is a basic ingredient for any future diplomatic success."

— Jerusalem must not be discussed until the very end of the process. It is a "deal breaker" to address Jerusalem prematurely.

— A basic agreement between two sides will be founded on the core idea of "terms" for the Palestinians and "time" for the Israelis.

Gelb, according to a summary report released by the Washington Institute, told his audience that this last idea is critical. "If there is to be a peace agreement, it will almost certainly involve the creation of Palestinian state."

In fact, the former State Department official said, that in internal U.S. government planning documents, the United States has always assumed that this will be the case. He, however, thought that much has to happen to convince Israel that Palestinian statehood is a risk worth taking and therefore implementation of any statehood arrangement should be extended over a long period — 10 to 15 years — and should be completed in phases.

The writer is a Washington-based freelance journalist. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

1848, 1989, and all that

By Gwynne Dyer

THEY ARE bringing out a designer version of Karl Marx's 'Communist Manifesto' to mark the 150th anniversary of its first publication in 1848. "The book will be finely crafted and of exceptional beauty," burred Emilia La Fuente Sanchez of Verso Books, "bound in high-quality cloth, with coloured page ends, a ribbon page-marker, and a stunning jacket illustration by Komar and Melamid."

The last bit rings an odd note: Komar and Melamid are two post-modern artists who fled the Soviet Union in 1978. But re-publication was the least they could do for the old boy after the worst decade for Marxism since he came up with the idea — and they even got Eric Hobsbawm, the English-speaking world's best-known Marxist historian (all right, its only famous Marxist historian) to write the introduction.

Hobsbawm is generous about the 'young Marx', reminding us that some of his bolder predictions about capitalist societies, like globalisation ("a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country") and the decline of the family, have only come true in the past 30 years. But he makes little refer-

ence to 1848, the fatal year when all the 'Marxist' regimes of Europe began to fall, nor does he mention that Marx was not a major factor in that other year of pan-European revolution, 1848.

Very few people had read Marx's 'Manifesto' when revolutions broke out all over Europe in 1848. The main influence on the radicals was Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who had written his own manifesto, 'What is Property', in 1840, and answered: 'Property is theft.'

That, rather than 'Workers of the world unite', was the phrase on the workers' lips as they rose in what was (in Paris at least) the first genuine working-class revolution. But what's important to us now is why 1848 failed so badly while 1989 (so far) has been a great success.

Lots of people in Russia, in Bosnia, and even in former East Germany think the revolutions of 1989 and their aftermath were not a happy turn of events, but big changes always produce casualties. The fact is that a miracle occurred: 350 million people living under totalitarian regimes that had been in power between 40 and 70 years freed themselves, for the most part non-violently, and at the same time carried out the last great act of decolonisation.

Between 1989 and 1993, the number of independent countries

in Europe (not counting mini-states like Liechtenstein and Vatican City) grew from 30 to 49. Only eight of the new states experienced serious fighting on their soil, and they were all relatively small countries (total population about 35 million) in the mountainous and ethnically tangled southern borderlands of the continent.

It hasn't been an easy decade, but by now around 300 million of those 350 million people live in more or less stable democratic societies (despite varying degrees of corruption and 'mafia' influence). Only about a third of them are seeing economic daylight yet, but that will come too in most places. Compared to the usual track record of revolutions, this is a fantastic success. Why?

The only year in European history — indeed, in world history — that compares with 1989 for international revolutionary fever is 1848. The uprising that broke out against the monarchy in Paris in February, 1848 was hardly a novelty: the French, having pioneered the whole idea of revolution 60 years before, had more or less fallen into the habit of revolt. But this time, it spread.

The key event was demonstrations in Vienna, capital of the Austrian empire, exactly 150 years ago this week (12-15 March).

Austria, which then ruled much of central Europe and the northern Balkans, was the core of reaction in Europe, home to the statesman Prince Klemens von Metternich who had coordinated the suppression of every liberal stirring in the continent for the past 30 years. But when the students marched, he resigned in a day. It was that sort of year: there were uprisings in Prague, Budapest, Berlin, Munich, Milan, Rome, the Netherlands, Denmark — pretty well everywhere from Poland to Sicily. But in the end, it produced little real change.

It began as the 'Springtime of the Peoples'. As the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin put it: "I breathed through all my senses and all my pores the intoxication of the revolutionary atmosphere. It was a holiday without beginning and without end." But it actually ended in tears, and rather quickly. Everywhere, the forces of democracy and national liberation were divided and then defeated piecemeal by the servants of tyranny and empire.

Even in France, the conservative rural areas voted in a government that massacred the Paris workers in the 'June Days', and by the end of the year had chosen a descendant of Napoleon to be president. (He made himself emperor in a

conp four years later.)

What went wrong? Partly, it was just inexperience: there was not much history of revolution in the world then, and so fewer examples of how things can go wrong. But the bigger problem was nationalism: you tend to forget the democratic rights of others when your main goal is to set your own national group up as a going concern. Hungary's independence was destroyed, for example, when its own oppressed subject peoples joined with Austrian and Russian imperial forces to bring it back under Vienna's rule.

And the difference in 1989? An extra century and a half of experience, which taught most democrats in Communist-ruled Europe that they must not get sidetracked into nationalist disputes even before the main battle for freedom is won.

It is unfashionable to say this in a world still transfixed by Balkan horrors (most recently in Kosovo), but the leaders of big countries like Russia, Ukraine, Poland and reunited Germany have been almost saintly in their refusal to get trapped in sterile quarrels over issues like borders and the treatment of minorities. Slowly, painfully, but eventually, we do learn.

كلامه الاول

Crown Prince, Netanyahu issue joint statement

(Continued from page 1)

the region. People effectively would like to see peace translated into concrete terms and when peace is tangible it becomes real and permanent. And to be so, it must be appreciated. It will not be appreciated unless it touches the lives of people and our commitment is to this kind of peace, a peace in which people believe. I would like to say that the joint communiqué that we have agreed upon on the basis of visits by Minister Sharon, and Minister Shlezinger, and our conversations with Minister Mordechai and other members of your cabinet is a very full agenda of commitments, not only to our bilateral (actions) but also a call to the world to renew and support their commitment to, multilateral actions, serving the cause of stabilisation of the region. I would say that today I feel the sense of cautious optimism. Having come from Ramallah to meet with you to recognise the importance of doing good things in hard times at the regional level. That is to say not only wait for an initiative by the United States but to continue building on our achievements is the theme that I will carry back to Amman with me today. So I hope that you ladies and gentlemen will assist us in disseminating this vision. We cannot afford continued acts of violence and today while in your company, another act of violence was committed in the Hebron region. I hope that those in particular among our youth and among our intelligentsia would recognise that continuing to bank on extremism is a lonely investment. We are putting our hopes into realistic actions.

Replying to a question at a joint press conference with the Israeli prime minister, Prince Hassan said that during a recent crisis over the weapons of mass-destruction and the inspection regime in the case of Baghdad: I hope the crisis is over and that it will be resolved in terms of verification. I would like to remind the Israeli public that there is a way of a society that swept through the country. We watched you collecting gas-masks, new gas masks. I would have liked to bear in mind the question of security in Jordan. We are very much part of that smoking area and we do not even have old gas masks. So security conversations with the Israeli government and specialised institutions in the Israeli government will continue. We did have an episode to which you referred in our relations,

however, we will continue on the basis of intra-independence that is to say a respect for the security of each country in this region. But once again, I do want to say that we will continue in the spirit of the mutual respect and trust and I think that today in our conversations we have emphasised that this visit and this communiqué is a landmark change for the better.

In reply to a question on His Majesty King Hussein's recent visits to the Gulf, Egypt and the coming visit to the U.S. and the Crown Prince's visits to Ramallah and Tel Aviv, Prince Hassan said:

We believe that lighting a candle is better than cursing darkness and my visit to Tel Aviv and that to Ramallah yesterday aimed at appealing to the public opinion to take the lead to revive the peace process and to avert deviation from the diplomatic or peaceful solution. Acts of violence will persist so long as no peaceful solution is found but more importantly is to contain its root cause and to uproot them.

Prince Hassan noted that the meetings Tuesday in Tel Aviv have completed the consultation Jordan has been doing prior to the King's forthcoming visit to the U.S.

Prince Hassan said that the participation of representatives of parliaments in Tel Aviv's meetings gives the meetings special importance.

Asked about the crisis resulting from the Israeli Mossad's failed attempt on the life of Khaled Mshat, Prince Hassan said: "Prime Minister Netanyahu and I have had our differences and that Jordan and Israel have had their own differences, however, I am not here to talk about today and yesterday, but about today and tomorrow. I can say that we are looking for a new spirit of mutual respect and we do believe that the peace process on its own is enough to generate good neighbourly relations. We have to work at these relations. In all aspects of our cooperation, we have seen progress including in the security field.

In reply to a question on whether he was relaying messages from the Palestinian leadership to the Israeli government, the Crown Prince said: "Well, I would like to say that in terms of delivering messages, I said very clearly to our Palestinian brethren that I am not here as a mediator or as a representative. They can represent their case very clearly and in direct and ongoing conversation with the Israeli government. If I am allowed to com-

ment on the meeting I had today which I regarded as fruitful and upbeat, there was certainly a commitment to the rejuvenation of the peace process and it is my hope that in the days and weeks ahead to bear in mind that 1998 is a year of redeployment, indeed a year of consolidating and achieving peace in the context of Oslo that these achievements will be realised.

Answering a question about whether strengthening Jordanian-Israeli relations will be at the expense of the Palestinians, Prince Hassan said his visit to Ramallah was at the invitation of the Palestinians in order to clearly understand from them what the reality check, what their view of their future and the present is. And in that sense the impressions that I came away with, and if you heard my conversation to the cameras with Chairman Arafat was very clearly a conversation based on a commitment to the rejuvenation of the peace process. I think that the opportunity is there to achieve further in consolidated peace.

Asked a question on the major practical measures that should be taken by the Israelis, Prince Hassan said: "We underline the need to reinvigorate the peace process on all bilateral tracks and I would like to stress once again the importance of what has been achieved during the visits of ministers Sharon and Shlezinger. Once again, I think that great steps had been achieved in terms of discussions on water, life-saving water, economy and trade. But I have to say to our Jordanian audience that there are those who accuse us of 'normalisation'. Maybe they can use another word 'naturalisation' and there are those who sit back in Amman and say to us: 'Where are the fruits of peace?' We cannot have both ways.

Following is the major excerpts from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's statement to the press:

I want to say at this point how much all the people of Israel appreciated King Hussein, his magnanimous and courageous leadership and his gesture to the victims of terrorism. It symbolises for us the triumph of good will over evil and this was commemorated a few days ago in a very moving Jordanian-Israeli ceremony on the banks of the Jordan. It is time to devote all our energies to bring peace, security and prosperity to all the peoples of the region. Now I

can tell you that Prince Hassan has been saying this for a very long time. He said this in the very first meeting we had years ago. He talked about peace and prosperity and regional security. He has advocated Arab-Israeli peace and Arab-Israeli cooperation for many years. We agree both of us that this is a great imperative of our time, the need to achieve peace in the region speedily and as completely as possible. We have been doing that on the Israeli-Jordanian front.

On the Jordanian-Israeli relationship, Mr. Netanyahu said: "I think this relationship should and can serve as a model for the benefits of peace for others as well. Our relationship with Jordan has placed a special emphasis on normalisation from the very beginning. We believe that this is the only way to have our peoples enjoy not only the formality of peace, but the fruits of peace.

On Jordanian-Israeli trade, Mr. Netanyahu said: "In the last year, Jordanian-Israeli trade has doubled. And we would like to set a target of doubling it again this year through the various work we have been doing with our ministers, Sharon and Shlezinger and their counterparts in Jordan. We are eager to expand this cooperation.

What we want to do in concrete way is exactly what we are doing with each other. We have some problems. We don't want to wait for somebody to deliver us from these problems. We sat down, one opposing the other, and we solved the problem. There is no other way to get peace. You cannot impose it. It has to come from within.

In reply to a question on Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli trade cooperation, Mr. Netanyahu said: "We have agreed to take up this point by seeking to convene in the coming days a tripartite meeting. Jordan and Israel have agreed on this meeting and if the Palestinians are eager to, then we can hold a meeting and discuss in the next few days ways to facilitate the bilateral trade.

Answering a question on his meeting with Prince Hassan, Mr. Netanyahu said: "Certainly we have had today beginning in the relationship between Jordan and Israel. I think we have lit more than one candle. We lit candles of water and trade cooperation and transportation. We are very pleased that our relationship with Jordan is running very smoothly."

Joint Jordanian-Israeli statement

The following is the text of the joint statement made Tuesday at the conclusion of talks in Tel Aviv between HRH Crown Prince Hassan and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu.

The Crown Prince of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Prince El Hassan Ben Talal, met in Tel Aviv, Israel, with the prime minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, on Tuesday, March 10, 1998.

THE CROWN Prince and the Prime Minister discussed a wide range of bilateral and regional issues, and noted with satisfaction the continuation of their dialogue, as well as the one taking place between the two states. They emphasised the need for continued constructive dialogue on matters of mutual concern, in order to build and strengthen peace bilaterally and regionally.

The two leaders emphasised the need to reinvigorate the peace process in all bilateral tracks and multilateral working groups. They underlined the need to achieve tangible progress by implementing agreements reached between Israel and the Palestinians, and to set the stage for a lasting and just peace between them. They also commended the historic role played by the United States in this regard.

The Crown Prince and the prime minister agreed that comprehensive peace requires the resumption of multilateral negotiations in all five working groups as well as the steering committee. They also expressed their wish to see the building of regional institutions which have been agreed upon. They paid special attention to the MENA economic conferences and to the Barcelona process. In this regard they

expressed appreciation for the European Barcelona initiative and their desire for concrete and constructive results at the next meeting in Palermo, Italy, in June 1998. The two sides reiterated the need to attain equal progress in the three baskets of the Barcelona process, i.e. the political and security basket; the economic and financial basket; and the social, cultural and human basket.

The Crown Prince and the prime minister noted with satisfaction the results of the visits to Jordan of Israel's ministers of national infrastructure, Ariel Sharon, and of industry and trade, Natan Sharansky, on March 8 and 9, respectively.

The following understandings were reached during those two visits:

A. WATER AND INFRA-STRUCTURE:

1. Both sides agreed to expand cooperation and mutual assistance for better utilisation of water resources, including the improvement of storage facilities, in accordance with the peace treaty.

2. Recognising the importance of cooperation in the field of energy, the two sides have agreed to the following:

(a) To accelerate the connection of the electricity grid in the Aqaba-Eilat region.

(b) To hold a meeting this May to discuss independent power projects and related initiatives.

(c) To co-develop solar and wind energy projects.

3. Convinced of the importance of local, regional and international tourism, the two parties agreed to explore the possibilities of joint development of tourist projects in the Um Qais (Hamat Gader) area and in the Wadi Araba area along the "Spice Route."

4. The two sides expressed their support for pursuing the idea of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal (RSDSC), subject to the positive analysis of the international financial institutions as to the economic feasibility of the project.

B. ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS:

1. In recognition of their mutual desire to expand bilateral economic and trade relations, the two sides will continue to positively review their current agreements and will strive to reach new ones.

2. With the aim of removing non-tariff barriers to their trade, the two sides signed a mutual recognition agreement between their national standards institutions. They will soon exchange letters of accreditation between their laboratories.

3. Israel announced the establishment of a \$100 million facility, through its government's credit insurance agency, the Israeli Foreign Trade Risk Insurance Corporation (IFTRIC). The facility is designed to promote joint ventures and other economic activities in Jordan.

4. The two sides expressed their gratitude to the U.S. for the agreement to grant duty-free treatment to joint ventures' production in the qualifying industrial zone in Jordan. They agreed to establish a bilateral committee to approve the qualified joint ventures.

5. The two sides will jointly approach the European Union urging it to recognise cumulation of origin between Jordan and Israel so as to grant duty-free entry to products of cumulative Jordanian-Israeli origin. The two sides will establish a joint bilateral committee to harmonise their rules of origin and relevant

administrative and customs procedures.

6. The two sides recognise the importance of developing and expanding trade between Jordan, the PA and Israel. In this context, they note the following:

(a) The three ministers of industry and trade of Jordan, Israel and PA will meet soon to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern.

(b) Israel approves in principle the expansion of the lists attached to the economic agreement with the PA pertaining to the trade between the PA, Jordan and Egypt, by including a substantial part of the list of goods recently submitted by the PA to Israel. Details of such an expansion will be worked out between the PA and Israel in their joint economic committee.

(c) The two sides fully support the rebuilding of the King Hussein (Allenby) Bridge. Japan's contribution in this regard is highly appreciated.

C. TRANSPORTATION:

1. Israel has informed Jordan of its government's decision of March 1, 1998, concerning the joint Aqaba-Eilat Airport which included increasing the number of the diverted international flights from Eilat to the joint airport. The two sides have reiterated their support for this important bilateral joint venture.

2. Jordan and Israel have expressed their support for the construction of a railway link between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea for their mutual benefit. It was also agreed to establish a link between the Jordanian railway system and Israel in the area of the Dead Sea.

Prince Hassan's address at dinner banquet

Following is the text of the address made by HRH Crown Prince Hassan at a dinner banquet held in his honour by Prime Minister Netanyahu.

It is certain, that we are all concerned at having the peace process recapture the momentum and vigour it has lost. We have all had ample time to assess the future advantages of peace, and not only to measure the complexities and challenges of making peace in a region that has been fraught with war for so long.

The treaties, agreements and accords already signed reflect the courage and the vision of Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis alike. Let us ask: What remains of the hope, the promise and the assurance of the regional regeneration that used to underlie all our statements about a shared future? Most of all, what has happened to the solemn pledges that we agreed to honour in Oslo, Wadi Araba and Washington?

The idea of peace must be translated into concrete terms. When peace is tangible it becomes both real and permanent. To be so, it must be appreciated. It would not be appreciated unless it touches the life of people. Our commitment is to this kind of peace. A peace in which people believe.

Historical legacy and geographical proximity dictate on Jordan a moral responsibility towards the Palestinian people. Jordan will continue to shoulder that responsibility until a just and comprehensive peace is achieved, that would allow the Palestinians to regain their legitimate rights and dignity, after half a century of suffering.

Peace certainly means more than the absence of war; it means the presence of justice accompanied by mutual respect and trust; it means compassion and humility, tolerance and reconciliation. Peace does not only signal the termination of hostilities, but also the end of humiliation and the restoration of human dignity. It is the only human and humane way to think and to act in the cauldron of conflict.

Within the perspective of human dignity and the misery inflicted on the innocent, our position is clear regarding terrorism. It has been taken into

account that the issue of terrorism is of grave concern not only to Israel but to all of us. The dangers this poses for regional security are too obvious. States must rein in dissident factions in their midst and stop financing this rampant violence. We are all prone to this senseless terror and we are all victimised by it. At the same time, we must put an end to the politics of despair and the economics of despair that represent the root causes of extremism and violence.

With regard to the Arab-Israeli issue, it must be clear to many that short-term solutions invite trouble. Policy must be viewed in the long term, from a human prism. On occasions I have used the term "the anthropology of suffering" to suggest that we must learn about and know each other's pain. If we are to avoid intensifying it. This, to my mind, is the key to release us from sequential historical grievances, the key to forgiveness if not forgetfulness, and the key to new beginnings.

We have proposed the establishment of a new security architecture based on regional concerns as the linchpin of all our endeavours. As this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the State of Israel, it is pertinent to note that things have changed considerably, both internationally and regionally since the early days of Israel's establishment as a state. Not only has the Cold War ended the polarisation of our region, but Israel has been recognised as it has signed peace agreements with its most immediate neighbours and already opened a discourse with others. Rather than any state in the region retreating into a fortress mentality, we all have, as people and governments, the opportunity to make peace work. After all, peace and security are intertwined.

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership launched through the Barcelona Process is comprehensive as it covers the three baskets of security, economics and culture. All the core countries, including Jordan, Syria, Israel and the Palestinians are partners in this process. We believe that this Euro-Mediterranean framework is complementary to that of the Euro-Atlantic.

It is our belief that both Iraq and Iran are important components for regional stability. We have continually expressed our concern for the innocent people of Iraq who are hit hard by the sanctions. A more balanced outlook in dealing with the countries of the region is called for. In the recent Iraqi crisis, a wave of anxiety swept over the entire region. It demonstrated the fragility of the situation and the need for a regional security regime to which I have already referred. The limitation of weapons of mass destruction, biological, chemical and otherwise should not be confined to one country. The region ought to be viewed as a coherent and coordinated entity and not as separate member states. The sad fact is that the Middle East and North Africa bought last year nearly half the forty billion dollars worth of weapons sold abroad.

Not just in the Middle East, but all over the world, we can observe symptoms of the fear of peace, and the fear of the future. A kind of pre-millennium tension pervades popular discourse. The single and familiar fear of nuclear annihilation has been replaced by an entire spectrum of new and unfamiliar or long-forgotten dangers. Kosovo is but the most recent example of such a phenomena. Again, our concern is for the people of Kosovo as it has been for the Bosnians.

Islam is unjustly viewed with great suspicion. We believe that Islamophobia, or the fear of Islam, is an erant and unworthy sentiment. It is a phenomenon that must be combated wherever it manifests itself. Indeed, in many parts of the world, a significant number of influential voices have been raised to warn against the specter of anti-Islamic prejudice and antagonism. As a result of our concern we have proposed an Inter-Parliamentary Council Against Islamophobia.

In moments of optimism, this makes me believe that we can find a way out of the present impasse. The ice did thaw between Arabs and Israelis; we did begin the long process of getting to know one another. Jordan has been cooperating with Israel on certain vital projects. The functional approach has been utilised to build bridges and

create confidence building measures. But there remain certain issues that are basic to a durable peace. Jordan believes that it is high time that we move to these remaining essentials. The recent statements of Prime Minister Netanyahu, during his European tour, have been encouraging.

In this respect, let me say that the term "final-status talks" is a misnomer; there is no finality about peace or about the development, prosperity and well-being that it promises.

In our region, there now exists a unique opportunity for a shift in favour of peace. The understanding of peace is prefigured in our spiritual traditions as well as the prevalent materialism of this world. It thus enjoys a powerful dual authority. When spread through our societies, the differences between our traditions, our ideologies and our histories still seem far less significant than our fellowship. Most religious traditions contain a golden rule: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Now we must understand that our neighbour, in a very real way is ourselves.

For those who do not love their neighbour, who fear peace, we can only repeat the observation of a leading British social anthropologist who stated that:

"The greatest pleasures are said to be overcome revulsions, and the most potent taboos are perhaps those which inhibit our most passionate impulses."

What can we practically do to achieve that paradigm shift to overcome past revulsions and taboos? Ladies and Gentlemen, tomorrow evening, Israel and the Jewish people will start to celebrate the joyful festival of Purim. It commemorates the survival of the Jewish people, but it can also be reinterpreted in a modern and liberal sense as a message of pluralism among the nations:

Lih' yot kol ish Sorer Be'vetoch Umedaber Bilshon Amoh (that every man be lord in his own house and speak according to the language of his own people — Esther 1:22).

Purim Samekh (Happy Purim).

Hungarian authorities crackdown on road and rail crime

Theft, assault and vandalism are increasing on Hungary's railways, and car thieves are busier than ever. Now the authorities are fighting back. Measures include the formation of a special railway police force, the introduction of high-tech systems and improved vehicle documents to thwart forgers.

By Thomas Land

BUDAPEST — Hungarian authorities, under pressure from the insurance industry, are clamping down on a rising tide of train crimes and car thefts.

Laws have been toughened and an 800-strong railway police force formed after several well-publicised robberies on international trains connecting Hungary with Russia and the Balkans.

Such trains are now officially designated "frontier areas," enabling investigations and arrests to be made throughout a journey.

"The [railway police] force is intended to counter the rapid, long-term proliferation of crime on the railway," said Istvan Sipos, chief executive of Hungarian National Railways.

A fifth of all reported crimes on the rail network last year were committed against passengers or their property, he said. Figures for every category of crime, including vandalism of safety equipment, had

shown an increase since 1993.

Computerisation has also been introduced to keep a close check on the movement of the network's 17,000 wagons.

Besides cutting insurance and freight costs by reducing thefts, it is hoped that computerisation will help expose corrupt railway and customs staff and improve the speed, efficiency, and safety of the system.

Computer systems will be used to keep track of consignments of goods that are currently being smuggled into the country for domestic use after they have been registered as duty-free transit cargoes. This is known to be a widespread practice.

It is also hoped that the high-tech system will prevent the repeated theft of valuable cargoes of goods such as fuel — sometimes entire trainloads — that appears to be carried out with the connivance of senior railway officials.

The fight against rail crime will also benefit from an extensive retraining programme for customs staff under the auspices of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. Thirteen senior officers are currently in the U.S. for special training in techniques for fighting organised crime. Others will follow.

"More than 50 officers, some of them holding senior positions, faced cor-

ruption proceedings in 1997," said Lieutenant-General Arnold Mihaly of the Customs Service.

The figure was up from 47 in 1996, 39 in 1995 and 24 in 1993, and the numbers may increase as the clampdown continues. Mihaly said: "The introduction of the computerised transit control system may well lead to a substantial rise in the number of officers under investigation as Hungary intensifies its drive to clean up the Customs Service."

One of his colleagues, Brigadier-General Jozsef Bencze, said of the training programme: "Officers chosen for [courses in] Washington will be part of a high-priority investigation department now being established. The unit, empowered to deploy advanced secret-service investigation techniques, will be concerned mostly with highly damaging economic crime, including big-time smuggling, forgery and theft."

One of the biggest smuggling activities involves cars. In an attempt to curb the rising number of car thefts, the country's biggest insurer, Hungaria, has set up offices where prospective car buyers can check a data bank containing information on more than 10,000 stolen vehicles.

In addition, a new vehicle documentation system is being introduced, which

the authorities say will make forgery harder.

Hungaria offers up to 10 per cent of the value of a stolen car as a reward for information leading to recovery of the vehicle.

"More than 16,000 vehicles were stolen during 1996," said police chief Brigadier-General Laszlo Forgacs. "But I can confidently forecast a positive turn in the trend. We are putting more officers on the beat. Our technological infrastructure is improving. So is the citizen's perception of public security."

Nevertheless, the number of vehicles stolen in 1997 probably exceeded 20,000. Police estimate that up to 20 per cent of these are sent abroad immediately.

The main markets for stolen luxury cars are believed to be the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union and several Asian countries.

Hungarian police recover only seven per cent of stolen vehicles, according to a survey submitted to the government.

Car theft has become a relatively safe and profitable branch of international crime. United Nations-sponsored conferences in Moscow and Warsaw were told last year —

The winter is an author and foreign correspondent who writes on international affairs.

— Gemini News

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Study finds 'wasta' practised on a large scale at ministries and government institutions

**** FIFTY FIVE** per cent of middle management at various ministries and government departments have admitted that most of the work at their institutions is influenced by "wasta," the Arabic word for "connections."

According to a comprehensive study, conducted by the Jordanian Studies Centre at Yarmouk University, on wasta in the public sector, the "connections" phenomenon is practised on a large scale by middle managers at most government institutions "to the extent that it has become a norm practised without hesitation."

The study said the wasta was an obstacle in the way of administrative development and modernisation sought by the Kingdom and had a negative effect on government performance. The centre attributed the main reason for the phenomenon to inefficiency and routine at government institutions.

Nearly 72 per cent of the sample that covered middle management said they disagree with the wasta in principle but they find themselves obliged to use it on many occasions. Only 18.7 per cent objected to that. However, 90.6 per cent emphasised that the wasta was a phenomenon that almost no government organisation is free of.

This percentage was considered by the study as a strong proof on the extent of the problem in the government organisation.

The study said that 53.4 per cent of middle managers admitted that promotions and appointments at their institutions were influenced by personal relations or favouritism.

In sharp contrast between what these managers say and what they do, the study indicated that 69.8 per cent of them consider wasta as a negative phenomenon with no benefits and that 92 per cent of the managers see wasta causing inequality and being a reason for tensions and clashes among employees inside the institution. About 80 per cent agreed that wasta causes delays or obstructs work that is more important than what has been achieved.

36.1 per cent felt obliged to carry out the work of friends and relatives at their own workplace and even at other government departments. 50.7 per cent of the sample opposed such a work-style. Moreover, 46.5 per cent said they would not hesitate to provide assistance to relatives because they expect reciprocation from them in the future. 37.4 per cent said that assisting friends and relatives was a source of pride and self-confidence for them.

In conclusion, the study said the reasons pushing the people to resort to wasta were the inefficiency of the institution, routine and inequality in treatment (Al Dastour).

Abdul Jaber tries to convince industrialists to pay higher fees for listing at stock exchange

By Tareq Ayoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A member of the Jordan Securities Commission (JSC) Tuesday said a decision to increase the fees levied on companies listed on the Amman Financial Market (AFM) is justified to help finance an expansion of the stock exchange.

Speaking to industrialists who protested the new increase, Tayseer Abdul Jaber, member of the JSC's five-man commission, said the decision was taken to finance the AFM modernisation which includes computerisation of the daily trading at the stock market.

Dr. Abdul Jaber was responding to fears of industrialists, who represent 140 firms listed on the AFM, that the higher fees

would discourage investments at a time when Jordanian firms are facing several difficulties.

The increase stipulates that the listing fees be increased from two per cent for each thousand dinars to one per cent of the total value of the listed shares on the AFM. However the fees should not be less than JD1,000 and not exceed JD10,000.

Any firm that refuses to pay will be subject to penalties that include the disqualification. That automatically means shares will no longer be allowed to trade at the AFM.

The previous regulation requested each firm to pay only JD1,500 as registration fee every year.

"The increase of the listing fees by five times will double the financial com-

mitments on the shoulders of the national companies, especially those which face financial difficulties," said Khalidoun Abu Hassan, chairman of Amman Chamber of Industry, who chaired the meeting. Mr. Abu Hassan said that the one week "grace period" by the JSC caused "confusion in the market because the amounts that each of firms had to pay was huge and not expected."

This increase will have negative impact on our national firms and it was better if the JSC imposed a gradual increase which could have been easily swallowed by these firms," Mr. Abu Hassan said.

Mohammed Saba'awi, an industrialist, said the formula for higher fees will become part of a series of taxes and fees paid by the

industry. He indicated that there was imbalance in the new formula "because they have different budgets."

"The new increase is unpleasant and the government should look for other methods to help finance the expansion of the AFM," Dr. Saba'awi told the gathering.

The new formula will not encourage investments in the stock market," Dr. Saba'awi said.

Several industrialists proposed that JSC review the increase and, instead, make the fees based on the profits recorded by each firm every year.

Dr. Abdul Jaber said the new expansion was part of the economic restructuring programme which stipulates "the restructuring of the capital market, especially the AFM."

He emphasised that following the creation of the JSC in September last year, "plans were made to expand the stock market, introduce more technology in the trading system and construct a new building for the AFM," Dr. Abdul Jaber said.

"In addition the JSC's new law stipulates the creation of three different councils that would run the daily activities in the market," Dr. Abdul Jaber said. "This will financially burden the JSC shoulder and, hence, the new increase to meet the new development."

He said that the new fees will help also in introducing new facilities and services to the stock market "which will carry additional cost," Dr. Abdul Jaber added.

Japan credit crunch rattles small business

TOKYO (R1) — Japan's credit crunch is hastening bankruptcies, rattling small business owners and being blamed for a string of suicides — but there is little consensus on its implications for the nation's beleaguered economy.

The severity of the credit crunch prompted business leaders on Tuesday to call on

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto to take more steps to ease the problem.

Faced with the introduction of stricter supervision in April, Japanese banks began restricting loans late last year in an effort to boost their capital ratios.

Banks are refusing to roll over loans, calling them in

early or asking for more collateral. In addition, they are generally reluctant to extend new credit, experts and small business groups say.

Economists differ on the seriousness of the threat posed to Japan's ailing economy by the credit crunch and by the spectre of increasing bankruptcies, with some saying

unfit firms must be allowed to fail but others fearing too many collapses could batter confidence.

Surveys show firms of all sizes and across all industries are finding borrowing from banks more difficult. In some cases, banks are so desperate they are asking large companies to return loans for just the

last day of March, when they close their books, one government survey said.

But it is small and medium-sized firms, which have fewer avenues for obtaining funds, that are having the toughest time.

"The crunch has come at the same time as the economy is doing badly and firms that would normally have coped with a loan to tide them over are now not getting one," said Koji Harakawa, planning and research director at the Federation of Small Business Associations. Small and medium-sized firms account for 99 per cent of Japan's total number of companies, 80 per cent of output and 70 per cent of the job force.

Bankruptcies directly triggered by the credit crunch have begun to emerge and will rise significantly, said Noriyoshi Kobayashi, senior researcher at Teikoku Data Bank, a private research firm that gathers information on business failures.

"The credit crunch is another kick in the teeth for firms already in pain," he said. "Small business owners are rattled." Two medium-sized listed firms, Food Trader Toshoku Ltd. and Daido concrete, were recently forced to file for bankruptcy when they could not obtain funds.

The sense that the credit crunch is making bad times worse has been strengthened recently by the triple suicide of the owners of three car parts firms, followed by the suicide of a picture frame company president and his wife who left a note reading: "We can't meet our payroll. Please forgive us."

The government has

embarked on a series of measures to ease the crunch, with huge increases in the amount of funding made available through government-affiliated financial institutions and 30 trillion yen in public funds earmarked to help banks boost their capital.

But few expect a quick end to the credit crunch or even a marked easing after April, when banks that meet the new rules on capital will have some breathing room.

"It is naive to think that the credit crunch will naturally disappear after April," Trade Minister Miisuo Horuchi said last week, repeating calls for the finance ministry to advise banks not to unduly restrict credit.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 10/03/98 19:34									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	YEN	FRF
US Dollar	1.8293	0.8101	1.4890	127.62	1.4140	1800.40	2.0617	8.1367	
DE Mark	0.5487	1.0000	0.3332	0.8141	0.7728	883.81	1.1288	3.3538	
GB Sterling	1.6382	2.8865	1.0000	2.4333	208.13	2.3178	2950.86	3.3791	10.0581
CH Franc	0.6718	1.2277	0.4092	1.0000	95.63	0.5488	1207.92	138.41	4.1188
JP Yen	0.0078	1.4332	0.4777	1.1665	1.0000	1.1074	14.10	161.63	4.8054
CA Dollar	0.7072	1.2803	0.4301	1.0486	1.11	1.2885	1.4543	4.3291	
IT Lira	1.0006	1.1780	0.3384	0.8826	1413.23	0.7848		11.44	3.4067
NL Guilder	0.4980	0.8771	0.2957	0.7222	61.84	0.8885	872.96		2.9755
FR Franc	0.1630	0.2981	0.0993	0.2428	20.79	0.2304	33.59	33.5900	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	YEN	FRF
US Dollar	1.8293	0.8101	1.4890	127.62	1.4140	1800.40	2.0617	8.1367	
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	0.2800	0.3770	3.6410	0.3088	3.6728	1528.00	3.4125	
Saudi Riyal	0.2868	0.1880	0.0317	0.1354	0.4310	0.1803	2155.15	4.8131	
Bahraini Dinar	2.86	1.8806	0.3486	0.58	0.8406	0.74	4083.05	8.0517	
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1847	0.0301	0.1301	0.4310	0.1803	2155.15	4.8131	
Kuwait Dinar	3.2728	2.3204	1.2749	1.2338	11.92	12.02	6000.82	9.5972	
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1830	0.0212	0.1028	0.3913	0.3832	418.03	0.9291	
Lebanese 1000	0.85	0.4640	0.2467	2.3829	0.2800	2.4037		2.2333	
Egyptian	0.2830	0.2078	0.0891	0.1105	1.0670	0.0895	1.0763	447.77	

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	YEN	FRF
US Dollar	1.8293	0.8101	1.4890	127.62	1.4140	1800.40	2.0617	8.1367	
SA Riyal	0.2868	0.1880	0.0317	0.1354	0.4310	0.1803	2155.15	4.8131	
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.1830	0.0212	0.1028	0.3913	0.3832	418.03	0.9291	
KW Dinar	3.2728	2.3204	1.2749	1.2338	11.92	12.02	6000.82	9.5972	
BH Dinar	0.3770	0.4347	0.1978	3.9527	338.639				
CY Pound	1.8644	3.4108	1.1358	2.7762	237.935				

Currency Deposit Rates (Bld)									
Currency	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year
USD	5.56	5.56	5.56	5.56	5.56				
GBP	7.26	7.34	7.40	7.26	7.26				
JPY	0.50	0.75	0.82	0.88	0.88				
DEM	3.38	3.43	3.58	3.38	3.73				
FRF	3.70	3.70	3.48	3.57	3.65				
CHF	0.96	1.00	1.06	1.22	1.30				
ITL	5.52	5.43	5.09	4.75	4.62				

Main Equity Indices									
Index	Value	Change	High	Low	Open	Close	Volume	Turnover	Index
New York DOW JONES	8603.81	34.37	8632.41	8566.84	8567.14				
New York S&P 500	1087.85	6.24	0.8	1061.36	1062.31				
London FT-SE 100	5832.1	15.2	0.23	5808.1	5794				
Tokyo NIKKEI 225	16882.82	10.29	0.06	17062.7	16901.1				
Paris CAC 40	3621.81	-4.34	-0.12	3646.87	3606.83				
Frankfurt DAX	4834.43	63.6	1.12	4833.89	4807.82				

Energy									
Commodity	Unit	Price	Change	High	Low	Open	Close	Volume	Turnover
Coffee (c/lb)	168.08	Spot							
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1620	Spot							
Sugar (\$/ton)	284	Spot							
Wheat (\$/ton)	95	Spot							
Soya (\$/ton)	26.45	Spot							
Tee (\$/kg)	190	Spot							
Barley (\$/sh)	0	Spot							
Rice (\$/ton)	400	Spot							

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	YEN	FRF
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.0881	1.1899							
DE Mark	0.3872	0.3881							
CH Franc	0.4798	0.478							
FR Franc	0.1188	0.1161							
JP Yen	0.0885	0.0883							
NL Guilder	0.3438	0.3463							
IT Lira	0.3395	0.3355							

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET									
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN									
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179									
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 10/03/1998									
PAST 12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
HIGH	LOW			TRANS.	JD				
346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	15.6	1.18	13	560	190360	340.50	340.00
2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	6	779	1389	1.81	1.78
5.800	3.250	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	6.4	4.84	1	750	2325	3.25	3.10
3.540	1.330	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	0.00	6	750	9665	1.35	1.34
2.680	1.050	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.11	14	25250	43178	1.71	1.71
5.300	4.610	THE SODUSING BK.	25.9	1.94	1	250	1250	5.00	5.00
4.180	1.820	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	10.1	0.00	3	390	739	1.89	1.90
4.020	1.990	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.3	4.73	8	1624	3301	2.04	2.03
1.530	1.000	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	0.00	0.00	1	690	612	1.05	1.02
1.500	800	BRIT. AL-HAL (SEITNA)	1.6	15.63	13	7900	7466	1.95	1.96
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 236.46 %CHG: -0.21									
2.490	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	6.2	11.06	9	1800	4126	2.33	2.26
2.150	1.800	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.8	4.43	1	1200	2460	2.00	2.05
2.420	2.180	ARAB UNI. INTL. INSUR.	8.4	4.79	18	167620	179353	1.12	1.07
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 123.30 %CHG: -0.10									
2.140	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	10.0	4.81	13	4222	8739	2.08	2.08
4.850	2.450	HISER MINERALS	53.1	0.00	1	2280	10670	4.85	4.85
1.550	930	KATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	8	2500	2750	1.12	1.10
590	370	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	19.6	0.00	8	4700	1794	1.39	1.38
9.350	6.700	ALRAI	9.5	6.45	9	1425	13150	9.35	9.30
4.600	2.800	ARAB ELEC. ENV. EDUC.	10.7	1.86	3	800	3450	4.47	4.30
1.090	980	SARFA EDUCATION	0.00	0.00	3	400	380	1.96	1.95
1.830	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	7.7	6.36	42	22496	39060	1.74	1.73
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 120.58 %CHG: -1.08									
1.160	930	ATTANDED	9	0.00	2	5480	6322	1.16	1.16
4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.2	3.615	18	5152	10845	2.7	2.87
7.050	5.620	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.4	3.01	1	5000	31750	6.20	6.35
11.160	9.200	JOR. PETRO. REFINERY	10.4	8.31	24	3732	39761	10.82	10.70
1.110	1.040	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	7.12	7.75	3	800	3223	1.23	1.29
2.580	1.260	INDUSTRIAL COMM. CORP.	9	0.00	5	895	1135	1.27	1.27
5.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	14.5	3.81	42	7900	41783	5.37	5.25
1.640	1.030	JOR. PIPES INDUSTRY	15.7	6.30	1	500	635	1.27	1.27
1.420	770	RAFIA INDUSTRIES	10.7	0.00	9	86	82	1.27	1.27
6.350	4.400	DAR ALMANA DV. INV.	15.2	4.03	9	6100	37880	6.24	6.20
3.460	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.8	8.62	18	19000	56129	2.97	2.90
5.10	400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.4	0.00	35	29450	14169	5.06	4.49
1.160	680	ARAB PAPER CORP. IND.	23.8	0.00	1	5000	390	82	78
1.140	660	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	4	1500	1020	69	68
650	510	NATIONAL IND.	9	0.00	10	4950	2732	56	56
1.010	370	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	7	4900	2123	45	43
750	500	JOR. ROCKWELL IND.	0	0.00	1	1000	560	58	56
3.000	920	KATL. CABLE WIRE. WFA	26.2	0.00	9	3750	4368	1.17	1.17
1.010	370	JOR. SULPHUR IND.	19.6	19	6	800	82	61	61
1.560	1.150	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	17.7	5.04	18	12600	17299	1.40	1.39
1.700	810	UNIV. MED. IND.	9	1.21	56	45150	45201	1.02	1.00
1.010	680	JOR. IND. RESEARCH	10.6	12	61	4700	4773	1.03	1.03
1.620	1.350	KATL. CEMENT	14.2	4.64	1	250	378	1.52	1.51
1.080	610	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	18.5	0.00	37	27000	27280	1.03	1.01
1.290	680	IND. ELEC. READY WEAR	47.9	0.00	23	12600	10834	1.42	1.36
1.250	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	14.5	3	13	1408	1200	1.19	1.19
1.220	880	UNION CH. & VEG.	50.5	0.00	13	6850	9788	1.17	1.16
650	480	JORDAN STEEL	35.7	15.31	27	47362	37491	82	79
580	370	KID. EAST COMPLEX	7.9	15.63	7	8400	5302	1.64	1.64
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 116.02 %CHG: +0.31									
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 171.44 %CHG: -0.08									
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 171.44 %CHG: -0.08									
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 10/03/1998									
0.1050	960	EXPORT & FIN. INC. 75%	17.8	0.00	13	31698	21504	96	96
530	340	JOR. TRADE TR.	10.4	0.00	25	146000	56940	40	39
660	480	KATL. CEMENT CENTERS	17.8	0.00	5	3138	60	60	60
800	660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	22	65200	14996	74	73
620	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	3	3200	1440	45	45
1.000	720	AL-SABAK IND. CO.	9	0.00	2	846	231	94	94
290	140	JOR. INDUS. MATCHES-JENCO	9	0.00	1	2000	14	14	14
640	370	ARAB FOOD & FEED	9	0.00	16	10150	5136	51	49
740	340	ARAB FUEL. INV. TRD.	36.9	0.00	320	40000	12845	34	32
750	560	KATL. MOL. IND. TRAFICO	19.6	0.00	22	51800	18459	39	38
690	580	MIDWEST PHARM. 90%	8	0.00	5	2378	1310	67	66
1.500	660	UNION TOBACCO 75%	9	0.00	4	1241	1487	1.38	1.45
240	60	IND. ELEC. IND.	9	0.00	21	100	15741	65	65
950	550	ADVANCED PHARM. IND.	10	0.00	10	15763	10229	66	66
670	370	PEARL SAR. P. CONV.	8	0.00	1	100	39	37	39
740	400	KATL. PORTFOLIO	2	0.00	2	275	55	55	55
950	470	OPTICALS REPAIRING 75%	9	0.00	5	7000	2500	61	61
1.000	660	NAT. ALUMINIUM. 75%	93.2	0.00	35	70150	29507	68	67
1.310	1.000	WATERBURY	2	0.00	7	3500	3803	1.10	1.09
1.000	750	EXCAL. PRINT. CO. 75%	8	0.00	6	4000	2560	91	89
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 238 517662 203445									

Graf and Hingis roll into Evert Cup quarterfinals

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Steffi Graf, battling her way back to the summit of women's tennis, and Martina Hingis, who replaced her there, cruised into the quarter-finals of the \$1.25 million Evert Cup here Monday.

Hingis, the 17-year-old Swiss who took over the world No. 1 ranking from Graf on March 31 of last year, needed just 51 minutes to post a 6-2, 6-0 victory over unseeded German Meike Babel.

Graf, the 28-year-old who is playing only her second tournament after a nine-month injury absence, needed just 46 minutes to down Japan's Ai Sugiyama 6-0, 6-1.

"I didn't think I would go out and play like that," Graf said. "It felt great! I was going for my shots, played very deep. It felt pretty good."

Hingis has thrived in the spotlight the past year, claiming three Grand Slam titles, at the Australian Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open, in 1997, and defending her Australian title in January.

But she said she was glad to see Graf, owner of 21 Grand Slam singles titles, returning to form.

"She practiced next to me," Hingis said. "I also looked over a couple of times because I also want to know what's going on with her, you know whether she comes back, what she's going to do in the matches."

But Hingis bristled a little at the suggestion that Graf was one player who might challenge her dominance. She noted that her losses to Graf — the last at the 1996 Chase Championships — had come before she hit her mature stride on the women's circuit.

"I was like 13 or 14 years old at that time," she said. "When I came up, I didn't have the chance to play against her anymore, so that's a little different story than I had against some other players."

Graf is scheduled to play her quarter-final match against Natasha Zvereva on Tuesday. The two have a long history that includes Graf's devastating 6-0, 6-0 victory over Zvereva in the 1988 French Open final.

Zvereva, the 15th seed, upset sixth-seeded Romanian Irina Spirlea 6-3, 7-5.

In another third-round match Monday, unseeded American Sandra Cicic upset ninth-seeded Frenchwoman Sandrine Testud 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/3).



Martina Hingis



Steffi Graf

The remaining third round matches to be played Tuesday were second seed Lindsay Davenport v Ruxandra Dragomir, fourth seed Amanda Coetzer v Joannette Kruger, fifth seed

Conchita Martinez v Anna Kournikova and eighth seed Venus Williams v Dominique van Roost. Hingis and Graf cannot meet until Saturday's final. "I would love to play

against her one day," Hingis said. "Right now, I have to go step by step. There are other players which I have to beat first. We both first have to get there and then we'll see."

French coach to keep promise of retiring after World Cup

PARIS (AFP) — French national coach Aime Jacquet said here on Monday that he would retire from his post on July 13 — the day after the World Cup finals.

Jacquet, who took France to a penalty shootout loss by the Czech Republic in the Euro '96 semi-finals, told 'France Football' that the World Cup finals would be his final bow on the sporting stage.

"My sporting life is not over, but it will be on July 13," Jacquet said.

"It will be perfect as I will have taken a lap of honour with the French team the night before at the Stade de France," Jacquet added.

The 57-year-old Jacquet, who took over from Gerard Houllier when France failed to qualify for the 1994 World Cup finals after Bulgaria beat them in the last minute of their final qualifier, said that only his closest friends were aware of the date he would retire.

"However, I did make it clear to the president of the

French Football Federation when I took the job that I would lead France to World Cup glory and bow out after that," Jacquet said.

Pressed on who should succeed him Jacquet said that he did not want to become involved in who took over but that one day former French international midfielder and current Toulouse coach Alain Giresse, who played under the French coach at Bordeaux, would become the national coach.

"He will certainly be the French boss one day.

However, first he must go to a big club ... then it will be plain sailing for him," Jacquet said.

First Division Basketball Championship Al Jeel seek to beat Hussein as fans await Thursday's match

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — As the season's top two teams — Al Jazireh and Al Orthodoxy — prepare for their Thursday night showdown, former champions Al Ahli and Al Jeel will try to improve their form and record in Wednesday's matches.

Newcomers Al Jeel who scored a 61-60 upset over last year's fourth placed Al Jalil, will seek to beat Al Hussein who have been struggling to keep their seat in the First Division after relegation two seasons ago.

Al Jeel are currently fourth and a win will undoubtedly consolidate their bid to stay among the prestigious group as that would improve their standing in the six-team event. Only the last placed team will be relegated to the Second Division.

In the other match, last year's runner up Al Ahli

will face Al Jalil hoping to improve their form as the first round nears its end.

Al Ahli who have been struggling with technical and managerial obstacles for the past two seasons are still trying to get the right combination after missing out on most of pre-season training while looking for a coach amidst the return of their star veterans to the lineup after two seasons.

Their 74-49 loss to former champs Al Orthodoxy, which in other seasons used to be the highlight of the basketball season, clearly left the competition to be settled between Al Jazireh and Al Orthodoxy.

However, onlookers

expected Al Orthodoxy, who finished third last season, to have been better prepared after friendly matches in Lebanon and the UAE.

The traditional competitive rivalry against Al Ahli was not there adding to the fact that Al Ahli's incoherent lineup still lacks physical and overall team conditioning.

The six teams will play two legs following which the top three will play a playoff round to determine the champion.

Titleholders Al Jazireh appear to be the best prepared and are just out of the West Asian Zone basketball qualifiers which

they hosted amid preparations to retain the crown they won last year ending a 30-year domination by rivals Orthodoxy and Al Ahli.

The only change on their lineup is the signing of Al Ahli's former veteran Samir Murqus who came out of two-year retirement and returned to the game.

Al Orthodoxy had an undisputed reign from 1976-1989 before Al Ahli won the title in 1990, 1992, 1993 and 1994 aided by the signing of Naser Bushnaq.

Al Orthodoxy came back to win in 1991, 1995 and 1996 and are hoping to get back the title.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	SF	Sa	Pts
Jazireh	3	3	0	262	156	6
Orthodoxy	3	3	0	241	147	6
Ahli	3	2	1	209	193	5
Jeel	3	1	2	174	220	4
Jalil	3	1	2	161	238	3
Hussein	3	0	3	159	252	3

FIA reject complaint lodged over Formula One 'fix'

PARIS (AFP) — FIA, motorsport's world governing body, rejected on Monday the official complaint lodged by the Formula One race organisers of the Australian Grand Prix over Mika Hakkinen's gifted win in Sunday's seasonal opener.

McLaren Mercedes driver David Coulthard controversially pulled over two laps from the end of Sunday's season-opening race in Melbourne to let teammate Hakkinen win.

The pair said afterwards they had a pre-race "gentleman's agreement" that whoever led at the first corner could claim victory.

FIA said that there was nothing wrong with "team orders" as it was a practice that had existed in motor sport since the beginning of the century.

They added, however, that the World Motor Sport Council would consider banning the practice at its meeting on March 18.

The complaint had been lodged with FIA by Formula One Australian Grand Prix Corporation chairman Ron Walker.

"It's not my place to discuss any punitive action, that is not my area of responsibility, but we've got to seek clarification on this matter."

Walker said the race should have gone down to the line, regardless of team loyalties.

"We've always maintained Formula One drivers are in the same category as Olympic athletes in terms of their outstanding fitness," he said.

"It's not the right of team owners to decide who's going to win."

FIFA to announce extra World Cup ticket allocation

PARIS (AFP) — FIFA will announce on Friday how the final allocation of World Cup finals tickets would be divided up it was announced here on Monday.

A FIFA spokesman said that the decision as to how many of the remaining 160,762 tickets each of the 32 finalists received would be taken after FIFA's World Cup Finals organising committee took soundings from the European Commission and the French World Cup Organising Committee (CFO).

Despite complaints from several countries including Germany and England CFO co-president Michel Platini said that the allocation to each of the finalists would not rise substantially — England have received just 10,000 for their group matches from the original pool of 2.4 million tickets.

Platini, who as a player inspired France to the 1984 European Championships and coached the national side to the 1992 European championships finals, is concerned that last week's announcement by Sepp Blatter, FIFA's secretary-general, that world football's governing body would release 125,000 tickets, to every finalist apart from France, would come out of the 160,000 remaining tickets.

Platini, who said he had little hope of getting unsold tickets back from the respective federations, warned against buying tickets from the black market and also the possibility of buying forged tickets.

"In Japan there are 40,000 tickets on sale (at the moment they are just imaginary as the tickets will only be printed in May), which is 10 times the amount the country has been given," Platini said.

"There were 20 million requests for tickets, so there are going to be 17.5 million unhappy people," he added.

Jan Peeters, secretary-general of the Belgian Football Federation, left the meeting a disappointed man as he was unconvinced



UEFA President Lennart Johansson (L) and FIFA General Secretary Joseph Blatter talk during a FIFA meeting in Zurich November 7. Johansson is poised to become the most powerful figure in world football, the president of FIFA, according to a Reuters poll of leading sports journalists (Reuters photo)

neither his country nor the Dutch, who clash in a group match on June 13 at the Stade de France, would receive many more tickets in what amounts to a "derby" match.

"I am disappointed because I have not received any guarantees of receiving any more tickets for the match. Quite frankly I am pessimistic about it," Peeters said.

David Davies, spokesman for English football's ruling body the Football Association, also said that he held out little hope of receiving many more tickets for the finals.

Allocation of finals tickets

PARIS (AFP) — List of how tickets for 1998 World Cup finals were distributed announced here on Monday:

Total	2,821,462	
Officials	34,000	
Media security	228,201	
Tickets on sale	2,559,261	
Business seats	216,085	8.4 per cent
Tickets put on sale for public and sponsors	2,343,156	
Sold in France (packages, lottery, etc.)	961,742	7.6 per cent
National Football Federations	535,769	21.0 per cent
17 official team operations	137,815	5.4 per cent
Sponsors	436,003	17.0 per cent
Others	111,095	4.3 per cent
Tickets remaining	160,762	6.3 per cent

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA '1' <i>Demi Moore ... in</i> G.I. JANE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PHILADELPHIA '2' <i>Pierce Brosnan as James Bond... in</i> 007...TOMORROW NEVER DIES Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	PLAZA <i>The biggest cinema production</i> TITANIC Shows: 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m. I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER Shows: 12:30 p.m.	CONCORD CONCORD '1' <i>Adel Imam & Yusra ... in</i> RISALA ILA AL WALI Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30 TITANIC SHOWS: 9:30 P.M. CONCORD '2' LONG KISS GOODNIGHT Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	GALLERIA 2 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 5:15, 8:45 <i>The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays</i>	GALLERIA 1 ABDOUN GRAND OPENING TITANIC Shows: 5:15, 8:45 <i>The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays</i>	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155 NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE <i>Starring Hisham Yanes and his group</i> For reservations call: 4640155, 4625155
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كلمة اليوم

World Cup easier than Serie A —Ronaldo

ROME (AFP) — Winning the Italian league title is more difficult than winning the World Cup, according to Inter Milan's Brazilian star Ronaldo.

Ronaldo, whose team have slipped to third in the table and are five points adrift of league leaders Juventus, made the claim in an interview to be published by Italian magazine "Famiglia Cristiana".

The 21-year-old former Barcelona striker also said the Serie A is not the most attractive league in the world, as most Italians believe.

"In Spain, there's more room for skilful play," he said, while the Italian championship is certainly the toughest, also

because in Italy "it's football 24 hours a day."

But he added: "I'm sure that I'll be living here for a long time."

Looking ahead to France 98 and Brazil's defence of the trophy they won at USA 94, he said: "We're all good players, and we know how to play football like no-one else."

"But we have to stay united, each of us has to resist the desire to be in the papers more than the others. If we can manage that, we'll win it."

SCOREBOARD

Copenhagen ATP tour

Renzo Furlan (ITA) vs Jonathan Stark (GBR) 6-3, 3-6, 6-3
David Sanguinetti (ITA) vs Jonathan Stark (GBR) 7-6 (7/4), 7-5

Champions Cup

1st rd
Nicolas Kiefer (GER) vs Gustavo Kuerten (BRA) 6-4, 6-7 (4/7), 6-3
Sergi Bruguera (ESP) vs Andre Agassi (USA) 7-6 (7/4), 6-4
Wayne Ferreira (RSA) vs Andre Agassi (USA) 6-3, 1-6, 6-4
Bohdan Ulihrach (CZE) vs Andre Agassi (USA) 6-4, 6-0
Albert Costa (SPA) vs Felix Mantilla (SPA) 4-6, 6-4, 6-3
Cedric Pioline (FRA) vs Marc Rosset (SUI) 6-3, 6-4
Andre Agassi (USA) vs Todd Woodbridge (AUS) 7-6 (7/3), 6-4
Magnus Norman (SWE) vs Alex Corretja (SPA) 7-5, 6-3
Karol Kucera (SVK) vs Dominik Hrbaty (SVK) 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (7/5)
Thomas Enqvist (SWE) vs Andre Agassi (USA) 6-3, 6-4

Spanish Open ATP tour

1st rd
Juan Carlos Ferrero (SPA) vs Andre Agassi (USA) 6-3, 6-4
Juan Carlos Ferrero (SPA) vs Andre Agassi (USA) 6-3, 6-4

Ever Cup

3rd rd
Martina Hingis (SUI) vs Martina Babel (GER) 6-2, 6-0
Svetlana Kuznetsov (RUS) vs Sanyia Omi (IND) 6-0, 6-4
Sandra Cecic (USA) vs Sandrine Testud (FRA) 4-6, 7-6 (7/3)
7-6 (7/3)
Natalia Zvereva (BLR) vs Irina Spilnea (ROM) 6-3, 7-5

NBA

Orlando 85 Philadelphia 78
Phoenix 134 Chicago 105
Utah 100 Houston 93
Golden State 95 Sacramento 88

NHL

Washington 5 Calgary 2
Montreal 6 Florida 2
NY Rangers 2 New Jersey 2 (OT)
Edmonton 4 Chicago 3 (OT)
Tampa Bay 2 Colorado 1
St Louis 4 Vancouver 0
Los Angeles 4 Anaheim 3 (OT)
San Jose 3 Toronto 2

Scottish Cup

Rangers 0 Dundee 0

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
AND TAMMAM HIRSH

TO THE BRAVE GO THE LAURELS

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ Q J
♥ 9 8 5
♦ 8 8
♣ A Q 10 9 8 7 5

WEST
♠ 9 8 4
♥ 10 8 4
♦ A 10 9 8
♣ K 6 4

EAST
♠ K 10 7 6 2
♥ K Q 7
♦ J 7 5 3
♣ A 5

SOUTH
♠ A 6 3
♥ A J 8 3 2
♦ K Q 4
♣ J 3 2

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 Pass 1NT Pass
20 Pass 3A Pass
3NT Pass Pass

Opening lead: Nine of ♠

Sometimes having the reputation of being a good player can work to your advantage. An opponent might give you credit for an expert play and suffer the consequences. But there are times when notoriety may be a better ally.

North-South were playing five-card majors with forcing no trump.

response. If opener does not have a six-card major or four-card minor to show, the rebid must be in a three-card minor. North's three clubs was to play, but South ignored partner and persisted with three no trump. East's double was more from spite than by any sense of conviction that the contract could be defeated.

East-West were known to be excellent defenders who were always ready to take a gamble. The spade lead was taken with dummy's jack and a low club was led to the jack. Since it was obvious that it would be futile to win the king, West ducked smoothly. Back came another club, and again West followed low.

Declarer was at the crossroads. East was certainly a good enough player to duck the first club holding K x. But West was equally capable of refusing to take the king holding K x x. After much thought, declarer decided that East had to have the king of clubs to double three no trump. So dummy's ace of clubs was played, and five club tricks with-ered on the wire. Declarer scrambled the obvious six tricks for down three. Had South taken a club finesse, there would have been at least 11 tricks there for the taking.

Agassi continues winning ways

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Andre Agassi, fresh from his second tournament victory of the year, defeated Todd Woodbridge in two tight sets Monday to reach the second round of the Champions Cup.

Agassi, who ended a disappointing and frustrating 1997 ranked 122nd in the world, climbed to 40th on the strength of his convincing victory over Aussie Jason Stoltenberg in Scottsdale, Arizona, on Sunday.

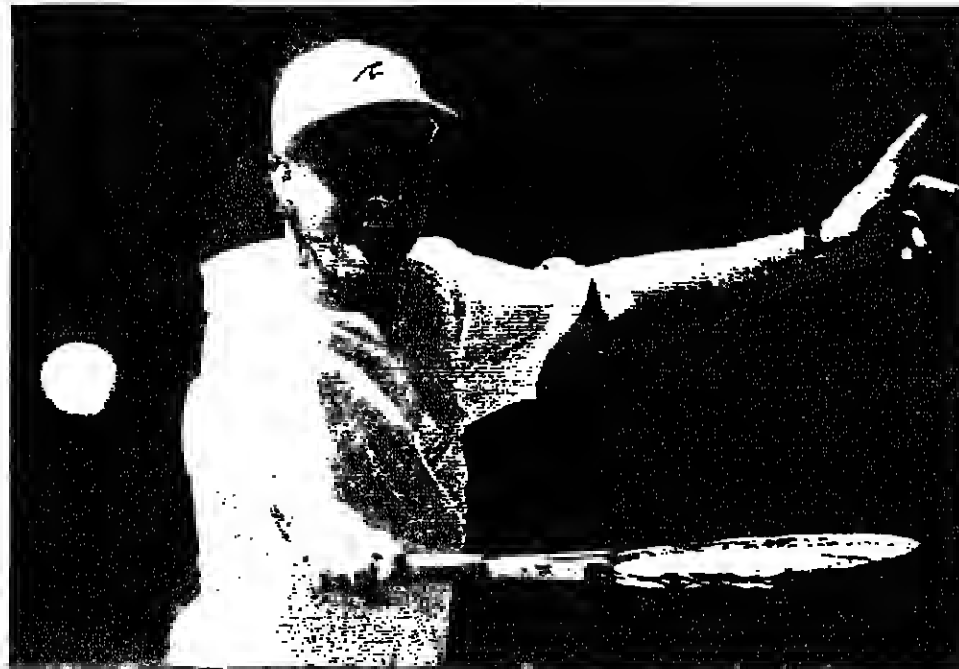
With Monday's 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 victory, Agassi stretched his winning streak to 11 matches, during which he has dropped only one set. But Woodbridge, ranked 34th in the world, kept it close.

He surrendered a break to Agassi in the opening game, but broke back in the fourth to level the set at 2-2.

They stayed on serve until the tiebreaker, in which Woodbridge gave up a set point with a double fault, then sailed a service return long on the next point.

Agassi failed to convert two break chances in the sixth game of the second set, the only break points of the set until the 10th and final game.

Woodbridge was up in



Andre Agassi

that game 40-0, but missed a forehand long, saw Agassi put away a service return winner, then missed two more backhands to give Agassi match point, on which he netted a backhand.

"I got a little lucky there at the end," Agassi said. "I hit a couple of good shots, but he kind of lost that game and suddenly the match was over."

Agassi failed to show the dominant form he displayed

against Stoltenberg, but he said he didn't really expect to.

After playing two matches Saturday because of a rain delay in Scottsdale and the final on Sunday, he could have opted to play his first-round match here on Tuesday.

Then he would have had to play six days in a row if he kept winning.

"I'd rather come here, tough out the first one, have

a day off and then play five in a row," he said.

"I was uncomfortable the whole match. I'd come from a smaller court, I had trouble picking the ball up..."

"The lines are the same, but eh court itself is big. Sometimes you can lose feeling as to where you are in the court. It's a little unsettling..."

"But I just managed to work through it."

The top eight seeds, led

by world No. 1 Pete Sampras, have first-round byes in the 2.45 million-dollar tournament, the first of the prestigious Super Nine events of 1998.

Germany's Nicolas Kiefer ousted French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten, the 12th seed, 6-4 6-7 (4/7), 6-2.

Kuerten was serving for the second set when he had to have treatment for lower back pain.

"Unfortunately, I couldn't serve so well. I couldn't stretch my back and rotate it to play aggressive and to move well," the Brazilian said. "It was a bad feeling to be there. I just was playing because I wanted to win, but I had no pleasure to play with the pain."

Ninth-seeded Spaniard Alex Corretja also made an early exit, falling 7-5, 6-3 to Sweden's Magnus Norman.

Spain's Albert Costa disposed of 13th-seeded compatriot Felix Mantilla, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3, while No. 14 Sergi Bruguera defeated compatriot Julian Alonso 7-6 (7/0), 6-3 and 15th-seeded Frenchman Cedric Pioline beat Switzerland's Marc Rosset 6-3, 6-4.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Anand wins Linares Tournament

LINARES, Spain (AFP) — Indian grand master Viswanathan Anand on Monday won the Linares international chess tournament, edging out the Spanish naturalized Latvian Alexei Shirov by a half a point. The 28-year-old from Madras, who earned a total of 7.5 points out of 12, also was one point ahead of Russians Garry Kasparov, the world champion and the only unbeaten player in the tournament, and Vladimir Kramnik. Anand is ranked number three in the world and Kramnik is number two.

Dundee expose Rangers failings

GLASGOW (AFP) — First division leaders Dundee earned a creditable 0-0 draw at Premier Division giants Rangers here on Monday in their Scottish Cup quarter-final. The fans showed their displeasure at yet another below-par performance by Rangers, who have won the Cup 27 times, as Dundee, who have won it just once, kept intact the best away record in Scotland of just one defeat all season.

Dalglish snaps up Greek defender

LONDON (AFP) — Newcastle manager Kenny Dalglish has finalised the signing of Greek international defender Nikolaos Dabizas from Olympiakos. The 24-year-old central defender completed a £2 million transfer after passing a medical Tuesday. Dabizas, who has 20 international caps, starred in his club's title-winning campaign last year and played for them in the Champions' League this season. He has signed a four-year contract believed to be worth £1 million to him and his arrival may put an end to United's long-term interest in Bayern Munich's German interna-

tional defender Marcus Babbel.

U.S. coach to name squad early

SAN DIEGO (AFP) — United States national coach Steve Sampson will name the core of his World Cup squad this month. Countries have until June 2 to inform the game's governing body FIFA of their official squad of 22 for the World Cup, which starts in Paris on June 10. But Sampson says he will privately notify 10-15 players they will be going to France 98 to relieve them of the pressure. "I think it's important to start giving certain individuals confidence they are on the team," he said. "There is a high level of anxiety associated with making the World Cup team. I want to relieve that."

World Cup ruins Bayern title hopes

BONN (AFP) — Bayern Munich president Franz Beckenbauer has blamed the World Cup for wrecking his club's Bundesliga chances. "Too many players are thinking of nothing but the World Cup, shirking tackles to avoid injury," he told the Bild daily on Tuesday. He also complained that Bayern's Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni was too nice. "There are some trouble-makers I don't want to see any longer. I'd like to see us transfer about 10 and bring in some replacements," he said two days after a third consecutive league defeat, to Schalke 04, as good as conceded the league title to Kaiserslautern. "Giovanni Trapattoni is just too nice. If I was in charge and a player didn't give everything he had, he'd be straight onto the bench, or even in the stands," the former Germany captain and coach said. "What right has (Mario) Basler to play if he spends the match strolling about?" he complained.

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Annan heads to Washington today to sell Iraq agreement

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan heads to Washington on Wednesday to sell the deal on U.N. weapons inspections which he negotiated with Iraq.

The payment of U.S. arrears to the United Nations, currently totalling \$1.7 billion, is also expected to loom large on Annan's agenda with senior officials of the administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Mr. Annan is not scheduled to meet formally with Republican leaders of Congress, who have criticised the Feb. 23 accord for being soft on Iraq.

But he is expected to see some of his congressional critics, including Senate majority leader Trent Lott, at a dinner on Wednesday to be hosted by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Mr. Annan's spokesman Fred Eckhard said Monday that the criticism of the deal secured by the U.N. chief was "just to be expected."

He added that the secretary-general planned to return to Washington after the Congress Easter recess "to meet specifically with congressional leaders."

Mr. Eckhard explained that Mr. Annan's trip was in the context of "trying to maintain political support for this agreement, which is why he is going to Washington and other capitals."

Mr. Annan stopped in Paris on the way back from Baghdad, and is expected to visit other capitals of the U.N. Security Council permanent five members — Beijing, Moscow and London — following a

Middle East tour scheduled for next week.

The Baghdad agreement provides for Iraq to open up all sites to the U.N. inspectors attempting to verify the dismantling of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The accord also established new procedures, involving diplomatic observers, for inspections of so-called presidential sites, from which the U.N. experts had previously been barred.

Gen. Lott accused Mr. Annan, who said after meeting Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that he could "do business with" him, of harming U.N. credibility by "cutting what appears to be a special deal with the most flagrant violators of United Nations resolutions."

The U.N. Security Council on March 2 unanimously endorsed the agreement, but warned of "serious consequences" — military action — if Iraq violated its commitments.

Washington meanwhile is at odds with China, France and Russia as to whether the United States has sufficient legal authority to punish Iraq unilaterally in case of any violation.

The U.N. chief is expected to meet Mr. Clinton on Wednesday morning, before lunching with national security adviser Sandy Berger. He is then due to meet separately with Defence Secretary William Cohen and Ms. Albright.

Following Wednesday night's dinner, Mr. Annan returns to New York on Thursday after a one-week conference.

Mr. Annan linked the Iraq

Security Council envoys to discuss travel to Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council could discuss Tuesday a proposal from the U.N. secretary-general that all 15 ambassadors travel to Iraq, council diplomats said.

The diplomats confirmed a report in The Washington Post which said that the ambassadors would thus see first-hand how the U.N.-Iraq deal on U.N. inspections of Iraq's so-called presidential sites works.

Some U.N. ambassadors have expressed interest informally in travelling to Iraq, although none have consulted their governments on the matter, sources told the Post.

Council diplomats told AFP Tuesday that Russia had proposed the initiative to U.N. chief Kofi Annan.

Mr. Annan on Monday sent the council new guidelines for inspections of presidential sites in Iraq, under which diplomatic observers are to accompany U.N. experts, in a recognition of Iraqi sovereignty and dignity.

The measures are likely to be put to the test in the next two weeks, according to U.N. officials.

A senior U.N. official, who requested anonymity, said that the inspections of all eight presidential sites would be "baseline" visits essentially putting into practice the Feb. 23 agreement signed in Baghdad by Mr. Annan and Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

This two-page accord lays out general conditions for inspecting eight sites that Iraq balked at opening fully to U.N. weapons inspectors, nearly sparking a U.S.-led military response.

issue to that of U.N. dues in an editorial article in the New York Times on Monday, saying that "the Iraq crisis demonstrates how indispensable the United Nations can be in the areas of peace and security."

And yet, he noted, the world body remained in a state of bankruptcy for all practical purposes, starved of funds by its main contributor.

The United Nations was kept afloat not only by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies like Britain, France, Italy and Canada, "but also developing countries like Pakistan and even Fiji," said Mr. Annan.

U.N. officials expressed concern Monday about discussions in Congress that they fear could lead to an appropriations bill for \$800 million of the U.S. dues being vetoed by Mr. Clinton.

Advocates of abortion language in the bill forced Congress to delay approving the funds last November.

Congress is also attaching conditions to payment that are dependent on certain U.N. reform "benchmarks" being carried out — a position rejected by the other 184 U.N. member states, which insist that Washington should pay up first.



ACTION FOR CHINA'S ELDERLY: An elderly man rests among the vases on sale at a market in Beijing. China will be flooded with 400 million elderly people by 2050 and experts are urging the government to take action now to create a social security system to take care of them (AFP photo)

Arafat meets Netanyahu aide

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Tuesday that he had met with a close aide to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but denied press reports they had discussed a possible summit meeting between the two leaders.

Mr. Arafat confirmed that he met Sunday at his Gaza City office with Yitzhak Molkho, Mr. Netanyahu's legal advisor and frequent envoy to the Palestinian leader.

"I met Molkho the day before yesterday, as I have met him now and then to discuss some matters," Mr. Arafat told reporters.

Asked about Israeli press reports that Mr. Molkho had brought a proposal from Mr. Netanyahu for a summit meeting to break the year-old deadlock in peace negotiations, Mr. Arafat said: "This was not discussed."

Mr. Netanyahu's office declined to comment on the reports in the Maariv and Yediot Aharonot newspapers that Mr. Molkho had sought to convince Mr. Arafat to meet with Mr. Netanyahu.

Mr. Netanyahu called publicly for a summit with Mr. Arafat during a European tour last week, saying a face-to-face encounter was needed to get peace negotiations back on track.

Mr. Netanyahu visited

Israel-PNA meeting fails to make solid progress

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israelis and Palestinians failed on Monday to reach an accord on the opening of a corridor to allow Palestinians to move freely between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"Unfortunately I am only able to report minimal progress," Israeli Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh told Israeli Television, adding that the negotiations were stumbling over security arrangements.

He was speaking after talks with chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat at the Tel Aviv residence of U.S. Ambassador to Israel Ned Walker.

The safe corridor, along with the opening of an airport, seaport and industrial zone in the Gaza Strip, are among the issues contained in interim peace accords that Israel has yet to implement.

Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have been deadlocked for a year, largely due to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to carry out promised troop withdrawals from the occupied West Bank or to halt the building of Jewish settlements in Palestinian areas.

Spain, Germany, Norway and Britain during his four-day tour aimed at countering growing European criticism of his hardline stance in negotiations with the Palestinians.

The prime minister briefed his cabinet Tuesday on the trip and outlined a four-point proposal he had presented to the Europeans on how to renew the peace process, his office said.

The plan, first reported by the Israeli press on Sunday, offered no flexibility on the key issues blocking the negotiations, notably Israel's failure to carry out three troop withdrawals from the West Bank which are required under interim peace accords.

Palestinian officials bave said Mr. Arafat has no objection to the principle of meeting Mr. Netanyahu but will do so only once Israel implements the troop pull-backs and other overdue commitments under the peace agreements.

Mr. Netanyahu has said he will only carry out one limited West Bank withdrawal once the Palestinians honour a series of their peace commitments, particularly by cracking down on armed anti-Israel militant groups.

Palestinian council members to form lobby to pressure Arafat

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Members of the Palestinian Legislative Council said Tuesday they were forming an organised lobby in an unprecedented move to force Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to conduct promised reforms.

"We have reached a dead end with [Arafat's] administration, which has not kept its promises. There are contacts going on among 20 delegates to form a pressure group inside the council," delegate Hatem Abdul Qader told AFP.

Some of the potential members of the lobby are independent delegates, but others are leading activists in Mr. Arafat's own Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, said Mr. Abdul Qader. Fatah holds 54 seats on the 88-seat council. "1998 will be

the year of the reawakening of the legislative council. We have a whole agenda including administrative, economic and political reform," said Marwan Barghout, head of Fatah in the West Bank, another organiser of the new lobby.

Mr. Arafat has promised repeatedly in public since December to conduct a reshuffle in his cabinet which the council demanded eight months ago due to reports of widespread corruption in the administration.

On Saturday, Mr. Arafat addressed the opening session of the council's third year but made no mention of a cabinet change, angering many of the most vocal proponents of reform.

Delegates have also accused Mr. Arafat of ignoring the council, saying he

has only signed into law only three bills passed by the council and that only after an uproar by council members.

Heading the list of bills Mr. Arafat has balked at approving is the Basic Law, which would serve as a constitution for the Palestinian National Authority. Many delegates say President Arafat is afraid the Basic Law would put limits on his power.

Council President Ahmad Qureia, a Fatah veteran considered close to Mr. Arafat, was cautious over the lobby effort.

"It is useful to have blocs in parliament. We have no disputes with anyone in the council, there are only disputes over the method. But the best way is to work through a single team," he said.

U.S. pushes for Kosovo solution as Albanians refuse to bury their dead

PRISTINA (AFP) — U.S. special envoy Robert Gelbard pushed Tuesday for an urgent solution of the Kosovo crisis as ethnic Albanians in the province refused to bury their dead until autopsies are performed on the bodies.

Ethnic Albanian officials and families of the victims in the Kosovo village of Prekaz, the stage of a bloody Serbian offensive last week, demanded that international forensic experts examine the bodies.

Autopsies are necessary to prove that numerous victims were executed by the Serbian police, they said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Gelbard met with ethnic Albanian officials in the capital of Kosovo, Pristina, a day after talks with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade.

The U.S. envoy said the situation in Kosovo was "extremely worrisome" and slammed the Serbian and Yugoslav authorities, saying that the "onus is on the government to resolve political conflict through peaceful political means."

"This government has trampled on the rule of law and ignored its obligation to protect the rights of all citizens," Mr. Gelbard told reporters.

"The only response [the Yugoslav government] seems to know [in Kosovo] is violence and repression," Mr. Gelbard added.

Mr. Gelbard called for a dialogue between the Serbian

authorities and representatives of ethnic Albanians, who make up 90 per cent of Kosovo's population and who want greater self-rule.

He said Kosovo needed "enhanced status." A significantly greater self-administration has to be the outcome," Mr. Milosevic revoked Kosovo's autonomy in 1989.

The U.S. envoy said he had explained to Mr. Milosevic the "extremely serious outcome" of a Contact Group meeting in London on Monday, which decided to seek an international arms embargo against Belgrade.

"Time is his enemy. He must move fast or there will be serious consequences," Mr. Gelbard said of President Milosevic.

But Belgrade showed no sign of backing down from its hardline position, despite the mounting international pressure and the danger of further isolating the country.

Mr. Gelbard also criticised Belgrade for blocking Red Cross officials trying to get aid to villagers in Serbia in central Kosovo.

Christine Palladino of the International Committee of the Red Cross said: "A truck with blankets, clothes and food was turned back just before Serbia" in the Drenica region at a police checkpoint.

Scores of people have died in a 10-day Serbian police offensive in the central Drenica region, which Belgrade says is the centre of ethnic Albanian

militant separatists.

Thousands of ethnic Albanians turned up in Prekaz Tuesday to attend the funerals of the victims, but the families refused to allow the bodies to be buried before they are examined.

The bodies are still in Serbia near Prekaz, where Serbian authorities have not allowed Albanian medical experts to perform autopsies, Albanians said.

According to the Albanian Committee of Human Rights, there were 49 bodies Tuesday in Serbia, of which 29 were identified by the families.

"During my career, I have never seen corpses in such a state, and I would not want to see something like that again, otherwise I will quit my profession," a Serb doctor told reporters on condition of anonymity.

On a hill near Prekaz, AFP counted 61 freshly-dug graves prepared for a funeral service. Men who dug the graves said they would have to dig at least "fifty more" holes.

As the international community turned up the heat on Belgrade, Britain said it will send a special envoy to the Balkans Wednesday to discuss possible solutions to the crisis.

Tony Lloyd, secretary of state at the Foreign Office, will leave Wednesday on a 24-hour tour as envoy of the European Union, of which Britain holds the rotating chair, said a spokesman.

Secret service questions Netanyahu aides over press leaks

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's secret service questioned aides to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Tuesday to find the sources of a series of recent press leaks. Israel public radio reported.

On instructions from Mr. Netanyahu, agents of the Shin Bet domestic intelligence agency are hunting for the officials who publicised a failed Israeli spy operation in Switzerland last month, the radio said.

The investigators are also looking into leaks to the press about a secret visit to Paris last week by Mr. Netanyahu's diplomatic advisor, Uzi Arad, and Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh, it said.

Mr. Arad and Mr. Naveh were reported to have had talks with unidentified foreign officials concerning a new peace initiative with Lebanon or Syria. One newspaper report said they met with an unnamed aide to Lebanese President Elias Hrawi.

The radio said Shin Bet agents questioned Mr. Arad and other officials in the prime minister's office about the leaks and were also planning to talk to David Bar-Ilan, Mr. Netanyahu's top media advisor.

One agent of the Israeli foreign intelligence service Mossad was arrested and several others narrowly avoided capture last month when they were caught by Swiss police reportedly trying to bug the telephone of a Lebanese national linked to the Lebanese guerrilla group Hizbollah.

The Swiss government kept the affair secret and was quietly negotiating the release of the arrested Mossad agent.

But the incident was leaked to the Israeli press and sparked the resignation of Mossad chief Danny Yatom, already under fire for a failed Israeli attempt to assassinate a Palestinian activist in Jordan in September.

Israeli press reports suggested the Swiss fiasco was leaked by Yatom rivals within the Mossad or by members of Mr. Netanyahu's staff who wanted to force Mr. Yatom's resignation.

Algerian rebels kill 19 civilians — press

PARIS (R) — Rebels have killed 19 civilians, and a military offensive in western Algeria has killed six rebels, Algerian newspapers said on Tuesday.

Attackers killed 11 members of two families in Boumedfaa area, Ain Defla region, about 150 km southwest of Algiers, overnight Sunday-Monday, said Le Matin newspaper.

Some women and children among the dead were "massacred with hatchets and knives," the paper said, adding that the attackers were Islamist rebels.

In the western province of Tlemcen, suspected Islamist rebels cut the throats of seven civilians, including twin babies aged 10 months, overnight

Saturday-Sunday, Le Matin said.

The rebels tried to kidnap a woman in the same attack but she escaped with an axe wound in the head and a bullet wound in the stomach.

In the same province, one civilian, who had been abducted earlier, was found dead on Monday, his throat cut and his body riddled with bullets, it said.

The security forces, who announced on Monday the deaths of four civilians in the eastern region of Al Tarf, have made no comment so far on the civilian deaths.

L'Autorite daily said on Tuesday that at least 150 rebels had been shot dead in military

operations in western Algeria since early February.

Six rebels were killed in the latest operation last week near the western province of Relizane, it said.

Relizane and other western provinces were hit by a wave of massacres during the Holy Month of Ramadan ending late in January during which more than 1,200 civilians died.

According to Western estimates, more than 65,000 people — civilians, members of security forces and Islamist rebels — have been killed in Algeria since early 1992, when the authorities cancelled a general election in which Islamists had taken a commanding lead.



UAE bans shisha smoking after midnight

DUBAI (R) — UAE member Dubai has decided to ban "shisha," or waterpipe, smoking in cafes after midnight for moral and health reasons, the Emirates News said. "The move was aimed at saving the younger generation from awkwardness and skewed character," the paper quoted Dubai police commander Major General Dhahi Khalfan Tamim as saying. "Another reason for the ban is its injurious health consequences." Cafes will still be allowed to serve the waterpipes before midnight. The paper did not say when smoking could begin during the day.

Presley fans make opera lover turn music down

LONDON (AFP) — Two Elvis Presley fans have won a court case to force their opera-loving neighbour to turn his music down. Leonard and Ann Tunesley complained they were being kept awake into the early hours by the loud operatic noises emanating full blast from Clement Mwangi's music system. They got their local council in Cardiff, Wales, to serve a noise abatement order on him, but he appealed the ruling. However, despite claiming that his tastes were inoffensive compared to pop music — "there's no tormenting screech in my music and no thumping beat," he told the court — he lost his appeal.

Costner's new film voted most boring movie

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Kevin Costner's latest film "The Postman" is the year's most boring movie. That's the verdict of Hollywood's "Boring Institute," which has announced its 13th annual pick for films that failed to set the pulses racing. Costner both directed and stars in "The Postman," which topped the list in the dramatic film category. "For Richer or Poorer," starring Tim Allen and Kirstie Allen, was declared the year's most lacklustre comedy. And the film "Bean," starring Rowan Atkinson, was singled out as being "by far the worst British import" of 1997.

J. Paul Getty becomes Sir Paul

LONDON (AFP) — Reclusive American-born billionaire J. Paul Getty was knighted by Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday, becoming Sir Paul. 12 years after he was first awarded a knighthood. Getty, who has been living in Britain for 25 years, was awarded an honorary knighthood in 1986 for services to charity, but was not entitled to be called Sir because he was American. However, Getty was granted British citizenship late last year, and Tuesday said he felt "proud to be British" when he heard the national anthem being played. "The queen said 'now you can use your title, isn't that nice,'" Sir Paul said.

Silence reigns at Crufts dog show

BIRMINGHAM (R) — Walk into a hall packed with more than 1,000 dogs and you would expect to be deafened by barking. But at the world's most famous dog show the competitors have been brought up not to behave like that. Crufts is a very serious affair — for dogs and owners alike. Four days of preening and prancing culminated at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, in the English Midlands. Mel, a Welsh terrier, beat more than 20,000 near-perfect pooches from 166 different breeds to pad away with the highest accolade in the dog world — "Best of Show" at Crufts.